

Can that be done by an organisation which remains one of the political parties? I may say that our party is different from other parties, that we do not want power. Who would believe us? And why should they believe us? They will retort: "Oh yes, but once you are in power, you will not behave any differently". Why should people think that we are more honest than others, when the others may be equally sincere in their opinions? We shall have to prove our *bona fides*; and we shall do that by getting out of the scramble for power. We must show in action that power is not the only incentive for political action. Unless the urge for freedom is wide awake in individual men and women, democracy is not possible.

What we propose to do today is the logical consequence of our thought developed over the last ten years, even when we were functioning as a political party. Even then we postulated a philosophical revolution as the pre-condition for any great social and political change. Having learned a lesson from the history of the world, we undertook to apply it to India. The European Renaissance created the conditions for the great political changes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. India has not yet undergone such a spiritual upsurge as experienced in Europe at the dawn of the modern time. She is still clinging to old traditions. Unless she overthrows the ballast of a dead past hanging round her neck like a loadstone, India cannot march ahead towards democratic freedom, social progress and cultural re-awakening. Unless we can alter the cultural outlook of the country, unless we can make people feel that they are human beings, that they can be self-reliant and can make their own destiny, that they are not puppets in the hands of a cruel Providence, that it is not their *karma* which made them what they are today, but that they can alter their own fate—no great change will ever be possible.

The foundation of a democratic humanist culture has to be laid before any superstructure can be stable. The vast bulk of the Indian people believe that life in this world is only a bondage, a bad dream. They must first be freed from that paralysing belief which robs them of all incentive for creative action. What they have done in previous incarnations is supposed to determine their fate in this life. The very logic of this venerable doctrine

of *karma* can be interpreted to mean that man is the creator of his own fate and hence of the world in which he lives! Then, he can also remake the world of his creation. Only the right conclusions must be drawn from the ancient beliefs. That is how we can draw from our cultural heritage the inspiration for a philosophical revolution which will change the outlook on life. That is the meaning of Renaissance. In this way, the Radical Humanist Movement will reevaluate ancient values and create the atmosphere of an intellectual resurgence preparatory to the creation, by self-reliant men, of a free, happy and harmonious social order.

The Radical Humanist Movement will be based on individual initiative, individual endeavour and individual freedom. Such a movement cannot be tied by rules and regulations. Whoever agrees with us, we do not ask them to become members of any organisation; but we shall expect them to act according to their conviction. We are giving up a rigidly organised existence because we do not want to create a barrier around us, excluding anybody as outsiders. We do not want to monopolise the result of our efforts. Nor do we want any credit. But we are going to remain ourselves, travelling the path of knowledge and truth as we see it, as we have done in the past. If our ideas have any sense, if what we say is true, all lovers of truth and knowledge will join the caravan moving towards a future of freedom, harmony and happiness. Let us have faith in ourselves, if we want to remake the world. Let us behave like free men if we ever want to see a free world.

POLITICS POWER AND PARTIES



M.N. ROY



~~2851~~

~~5856~~

~~5/111~~



2351

S/111

POLITICS POWER AND PARTIES



Books by the same author

REVOLUTION AND COUNTER REVOLUTION IN CHINA

REASON ROMANTICISM AND REVOLUTION : *Two Volumes*

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

HISTORICAL ROLE OF ISLAM

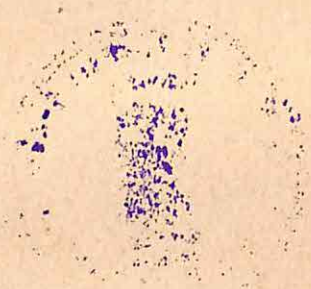
FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY : *Volume One*
Crime and Karma : Cats and Women

FRAGMENTS OF A PRISONER'S DIARY : *Volume Two*
India's Message

NEW ORIENTATION

MATERIALISM

NEW HUMANISM



RENAISSANCE PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LTD.
CALCUTTA 12.

Published by Lalit Bhattacharyya for
Renaissance Publishers Private Ltd.,
15, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta - 12.

WILLIAM P. V. B. LIBRARY
Date 11.7.05
Page 11552
Author

FIRST EDITION : APRIL 1960

Copyright © by Ellen Roy

Price : Rs. 7-50

Printed in India at BOSE PRESS by B. N. Bose
30, Brojo Mitter Lane, Calcutta - 9.

CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

I. The Failure of Philosophy	1
II Twentieth Century Social Philosophies : Critique and Alternative	16
III. The Individual and Society	33
IV. Ethics and Politics	41
V. A Politics for Our Time	47
VI. Politics Without Power	65
VII. A Party Disclaims Power	79
VIII. Democracy and Party-Politics	87
IX. Politics Without Party	94
X. From Party to Movement	103
XI. Humanist Politics	114
XII. Integral Humanism : A Social Philosophy	129
XIII. Human Nature and Humanist Practice	142
XIV. New Approach to Political and Economic Problems	155
XV. Humanist Approach to Elections	168
XVI. Decentralisation of Power	181
XVII. The Future of Democracy	188
XVIII Politics of Freedom : A Word to Young Indians	197
Annexe	211

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

In these essays and lectures, written or delivered nearly a decade ago, some of the perennial problems of political theory have been raised and discussed by one of the most original thinkers of the present century. This book, which is a posthumous publication, has been edited by the author's widow, Mrs. Ellen Roy, from out of material preserved in the M. N. Roy Archives of the Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun.

This volume, moreover, offers a critique of contemporary political systems and the bold outlines of a theory of grass-roots democracy. M. N. Roy combined great erudition and insight with extra-ordinarily vast and varied ranges of first hand political experience. He had taken leading part in revolutionary movements in India, Mexico, Russia, Europe and China. He also possessed an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of ancient and modern thought, both Eastern and Western. The philosophy of Radical Humanism which he evolved during the last decade of his life and of which the theory of grass-roots democracy expounded in these pages is one aspect, was the product of this rare combination of knowledge and experience.

This book is a major contribution to a modern social and political philosophy.

CHAPTER I

THE FAILURE OF PHILOSOPHY *

THE crisis of our time is a moral crisis. To understand the problems of that crisis, let us take the pragmatic approach. Indeed, we need not start with the assumption that there is a crisis. Our point of departure should be a critical review of the contemporary world situation. It is that situation which has compelled many thinking people to re-examine the philosophical moorings and theoretical premises guiding their views on social and political problems, and led to the conclusion that there is indeed a crisis. These are problems which until now were left to the tender mercies of academicians, but they confront us today not as problems of pure thought, not merely as academic problems to be treated with pure logic in abstraction, but as realities of actual life.

The civilised world has been confronted with these problems not since yesterday, but for a whole period of nearly two generations, expressing themselves in the mad cycles of war and violence and progressive deterioration of the moral and rational standard of public life everywhere. They seem to have baffled human intelligence and have defied solution on the basis of theories and ideas which had been guiding mankind until now in their social life, nationally and internationally. This experience leads to the conclusion that human history has reached one of those recurring stages when man has to take stock of things, look back on his past, examine current ideas and cherished ideals critically, in order to find out what is wrong with them to have brought him to a state of frustration, despair and helplessness. And then, on the basis of a critical appreciation of the state of affairs, reject some of his old values or revise them in the light of new experience and knowledge, and think out and evolve new ideas and ideals, as guide and inspiration for the future.

* Summary of lecture at the Summer School of Higher Studies of the Indian Renaissance Institute, May 1948.

These are not abstract intellectual problems ; I came to think about them as problems of my own active political life. I began, like so many, as a believing man, believing in something supernatural, superhuman, but at the same time felt that the old religious idea would not do, and that we must rationalise religion, conceive God scientifically. I was a nationalist. The experience of the nationalist movement made me doubtful about its possibilities, its methods as well as its "spiritualist" ideology. Marxism appeared to indicate a more realistic and effective approach to the problems which had puzzled the nationalist. The acceptance of Marxism as a philosophy of life implied breaking away from the old moorings of a rationalised religion.

But I have never been an orthodox Marxist. My attitude to Marxism was critical from the very beginning. That experience again, the attempt to solve the problems of life with the help of Marxism, brought me to the conclusion that Communism also was not a cure-all. I came to the conclusion that until the intellectual, cultural, spiritual atmosphere of the country was changed, it was not possible to bring about a political and economic reconstruction of the country, such as would promote popular welfare, establish democratic freedom and social justice.

It was experience, gained in the various attempts at improving the lot of Indian humanity, which led me step by step to the realisation of the fallacies and inadequacies of old beliefs, ideas and ideals. It was not the result of my personal experience alone ; it was deduced from a generalisation of human experience of an entire period.

Notwithstanding the pragmatically proved errors and inadequacies of the Marxist political theories and social doctrines, I was confirmed in the conviction that Materialism is the only possible philosophy. But my conviction is based on intellectual judgment ; it is not a dogmatic faith. Therefore, it did not prevent me from admitting the force of the recent challenges to Materialism, particularly to its cosmology. It is also contended that Materialism cannot have an ethics ; that there is no logical relation between a philosophy of nature and a moral philosophy ; that even if Materialism could successfully meet the challenge to its cosmology, that would not qualify it to offer a logically deduced system of ethics, and therefore, materialist philosophy

could not indicate the way out of the crisis of our time, which is a moral crisis. But I submit that a secular, rationalist system of ethics can be logically deduced from a materialistic cosmology. A moral philosophy which can do without a transcendental and super-sensual sanction is the crying need of our time.

The challenge to Materialism as a cosmology is over half a century old. It was delivered by the physicists who at the turn of the century discovered that the atom was not the ultimate unit of matter, and on that evidence, hastily proclaimed the "dematerialisation" of matter. Some began to doubt the relevancy or correctness of nineteenth century natural philosophy. Physics having revealed that the substratum of the world was not composed of "hard lumps of reality," philosophers imagined that the imposing structure of Materialism was crumbling. That was the beginning of the crisis of our time. It was a new flare-up in the age-long struggle between religion and science, between the religious mode of thought and the scientific mode of thought, between faith and reason, between mystic agnosticism and the empirically established belief in man's capacity to know. Being most probably the last lap of the life-and-death struggle, it has lasted long and has placed civilised humanity in a dilemma.

We are experiencing on a world-wide scale what happened two thousand years ago in India. Buddhism was the scientific thought of its time. It flourished for a period of nearly thousand years, and pushed Vedic Hinduism from pillar to post. But finally orthodox tradition triumphed, thanks to the absence of positive knowledge, and general intellectual backwardness. The defeat of Buddhism was the greatest single misfortune experienced by India. She never recovered from the setback suffered in that remote period of history. The contemporary world is threatened with a similar danger. The scientific mode of thought, having driven religion from pillar to post, is meeting the final assault of the vanquished adversary. The sophisticated philosophies waging war against Materialism with "scientific" weapons, are all in the last analysis rationalised religion. Denying the possibility of man ever knowing anything, they preach a neo-mysticism and revive the teleological view of life, which is the expression of Man's loss of faith in himself. That is the central feature of the crisis of our time. To come out of it,

mankind must therefore have a philosophy which places man in the centre of the Universe, as the maker of his destiny, and celebrate the final triumph of science over religion.

Some speak of a cultural crisis; if there is such a crisis, it is experienced only by sophisticated intellectuals; in reality it is a crisis of their own intelligence. Otherwise, how can we explain the strange phenomenon of modern men, endowed with scientific knowledge, godless men in search of soul, eager to enthrone a mathematical God in the place vacated by the old-fashioned God?

Sankaracharya's scholasticism, which belongs to the highest order of intellectual effort, succeeded in re-establishing the religious mode of thought, so very badly shaken by Buddhism. The scholastics of our time may also succeed in doing a similar mischief, promote a religious revival under the banner of the pseudo-scientific cults of empiricism, positivism, "realism," so on and so forth. A self-contained philosophy, beginning with a materialistic cosmology and ending with a secular, evolutionary ethics, is the only guarantee against the danger—a philosophy which will give an integrated picture of human existence and explain human existence, including desire, emotion, instincts, intuitions, will, reason, without going outside the physical world, which is at least theoretically accessible to human comprehension.

The crisis of our time is all-pervading, though it is not felt by the people at large as acutely as by the more sensitive and alert. Indeed, the victims of the crisis are not at all conscious of it. That makes it all the more difficult of solution. Therefore, to create a widespread consciousness of the crisis is the first thing to do. Whatever may be the cause of the crisis, it expresses itself in events of the daily experience of the common man. They should be helped to learn the lesson of their own experience. A general consciousness of the crisis will thus be created pragmatically. Once that consciousness is created, the desire to understand its causes will spread, as well as the will to find a way out.

Take for instance our own country. For hundreds of years, the common people have lived a life of misery. It was believed to be all due to the foreigners. Now the foreigners are gone. Is the condition any better? Is there any hope of early improvement? The people know only that prices have

gone up ; they do not get enough to eat and clothe themselves. The peasants produce as much as ever ; but food is not available at reasonable prices ; and the peasants have to pay three times as much as before for the articles they need. Cloth is produced as much as ever ; yet there is scarcity and the prices soar higher and higher. This is a puzzling situation. Its anomaly can be easily brought home to the people at large, who at present are the dupes of demagogy. It can be easily shown, without maligning anybody, that the situation need not be as bad as all that, and that the hardships and privations experienced by the people can be considerably relieved. The people will then begin to ask why it is so. Enquiry always yields knowledge and knowledge brings power, which in this case is self-confidence. Helplessness due to loss of man's faith in himself and his creativity is the ultimate cause of the crisis. What is needed is a practical approach to this problem of the crisis of our time. If we begin from the other end, by raising controversial questions of axiology to be discussed in abstraction, we shall never come to grapple with the crisis in practice.

Turning to the world at large, one hears on all sides talk of another war ; while the crying need of the time is peace, and nobody wants war, yet war is in the offing. Every sensible man, who knows what modern war means, must be against it, not merely out of moral motives, but out of sheer selfishness. War today is a double-edged sword ; it is bound to ruin both the parties ; there is as much chance of losing as of winning, and every victory will be a Pyrrhic victory. Therefore nobody wants war ; yet, everybody seems to consider war as inevitably on the order of the day. Who has placed it there ? It seems to have become a matter of fate. Everybody dreads the spectre of another holocaust ; yet most people think that it is inevitable. The helplessness of man and the hopelessness about his future have reached the limit. That is the core of the crisis.

Look at the state of politics everywhere. There are plausible political theories ; all talk of democracy ; yet nowhere do we find government of the people, by the people. There is a big discrepancy between the theoretical ideas and ideals evolved in the nineteenth century and the actual picture of today. Why is that so ? It is because man's mind, man's intelligence has failed

to take full advantage of the knowledge acquired in modern times, and apply it to the solution of the problems of actual life. During the last fifty years, this failure has become more and more apparent, until the condition of man reached its present state of hopelessness and helplessness. Human ingenuity seems to be completely exhausted. It is not true that there were excellent theories which merely have not been put into practice and hence the present crisis. That is self-deception. If those political theories and economic doctrines were capable of solving the problems of modern life, the world would not have come to its present impasse. Liberal, democratic, Marxist theories have all been practised, and all found wanting. Hence the crisis; hence the frustration, despair and helplessness. Fascism has been criticised and condemned. But how could it take the modern world by storm? The rise of Fascism only proved the failure of democracy as it had been conceived and practised until now.

The experience of contemporary history is a repudiation of classical, as well as revolutionary social, political and economic ideas. Everything and enough can be produced in the world to build up a better and freer society; yet, things go from bad to worse. Only one conclusion can be deduced from this realistic analysis of the situation. Ideas entertained and ideals pursued until now must have been defective and illusory. They might have been promising at other times and in different conditions. Now they are antiquated and inadequate. Failure and disappointment are bound to follow from attempts to solve the problems of the twentieth century with the ideas of the nineteenth or the eighteenth centuries. Man's ideas have not been brought upto the level of the material progress made until now. This lag between material progress and evolution of ideas is another cause of the crisis.

To the discerning observer and critical student, the contemporary world conditions present a dismal picture of decay and degradation; the perspective seems to be either of a ruinous war or a slow breakdown of the fabric of modern civilisation, resulting in a relapse into another Dark Age. Is there no way out of the dilemma? Man's creative potentialities are unfolded today to a much greater degree; he knows much more; his ability to do things is much greater than ever before. The situation, there-

fore, should not be so desparate. It must be possible to avoid the dangers. This conclusion set us thinking. There is something which has been inhibiting man's creativeness, his urge to go forward, to break down intellectual and spiritual barriers, to expand the frontiers of freedom.

All this points to the need of a new philosophy. But before we can arrive at a formulation of such a philosophy, the conclusion should be reinforced by a review of political and economic theories, classical as well as revolutionary through a logical examination and the test of experience.

All the different theories of crisis known so far, with their respective suggestions to overcome it, have proved either logically fallacious or practically ineffective. All of them claim to approach the problems of modern life from the rationalist and scientific point of view. All of them confirm the diagnosis that the root of the crisis is man's loss of faith in himself. All of them can be reduced to a common denominator—a teleological view of life, more or less rationalised and mystified. The common theme is that man, as man, is of no importance in the scheme of life and history. Faith in something mystic and mysterious, unknown and unknowable, logically follows as man's only possible moral mooring. Leave that mooring and man must drift aimlessly and helplessly on the stormy sea of life. That is how the condition of the contemporary world is described and explained.

But why cast human history in that pattern? Why should it be assumed that it must move in pre-determined cycles, as Sorokin, for instance, does in his dogmatic theory. The belief in a First Cause or a Prime Mover obviously lurks behind all these rationalised and "scientific" theories. The religious essence of the theory is also evident in its very structure. Idealist culture is the highest form of culture, and there is no ambiguity in Sorokin's conception of idealist and ideational cultures. Both are "spiritualist", while "sensate" culture is materialist. Materialism may be depicted as the devil of the drama; but determinism cannot be easily disposed of. The teleological view is also deterministic. The movement of human history in the vicious circle of recurring culture cycles is a determined process. Indeed worse; it is predetermined, because the determining

factor is not inherent in the process ; it is a *deus ex machina*. Sorokin is frankly an advocate of religious revivalism ; he pleads for the restoration of faith. But the doctrine is not controverted simply by characterising it as religious. Its self-contradictoriness must be exposed. That also is evident. How does the evil of a sensate culture follow the good of the ideational culture ? If the ideal of human life is reached in the ideational, that is to say, devotional culture, why does man fall from Grace again ? The dogmatic doctrine of culture cycles makes no meaning. Man moved away from the security of faith because that was the security of spiritual slavery. He must sail the uncharted sea of life until he discovers real security through faith in himself. Sorokin advises him to return to the security of faith in a Providence.

Maritain and Berdyaev do not say essentially anything different. Man wanders away from his moorings of faith, experiences fear, and comes back. The common cry of all is : back to the religious mode of thought. Their new religious philosophy is differentiated from orthodox revivalism by a discriminating association with rationalism and scientific knowledge. But such belated attempt to reconcile faith with reason, theism or mysticism with Humanism, mediaevalism with modernism, is bound to be futile. The plea for a restoration of moral values deserves endorsement ; but the morality of the modern man requires other than transcendental sanction.

The Marxian theory is also teleological : history is made by the operation of the productive forces ; there is little man can do about it ; he must recognise necessity and then he is free. Once you realise that you cannot be free, that you are bound hand and foot to some mysterious forces of production, then you are free ! The Marxist conception of freedom means slavery for the individual, and a society composed of voluntary slaves can never be free, except in imagination or propaganda literature. As a matter of fact, by the conversion to the modern faith of Marxism, man willingly surrenders his right to freedom, and cultivates a cynical attitude to morality. The exposure of the contradiction between the theories and practice of the optimistic nineteenth century helped the spread of Marxism, and the spread of this Jesuitic cult has aggravated the crisis of our time. It has

discredited Materialism as antagonistic to moral behaviour and ethical values and has thus played into the hands of the prophets of a religious revivalism.

The breakdown of the old social and political systems and the pragmatic discredit of their theoretical sanctions has brought about the crisis of our time ; the errors, inadequacies and failure of these ideologies, either of reform or of revolution, created an atmosphere of frustration, despair and disgust which aggravated the crisis. Civilised mankind is asked to choose between modern barbarism promising material well-being and security in a socially regimented and spiritually enslaved life, or a return to mediaeval obscurantism in search of an illusory safety in the backwaters of faith. This conflict of ideologies underlies the process of political polarisation, which may any day plunge the world headlong in a titanic clash of arms. A large number of modern men and women who would go neither way are frantically looking out for an escape from the dilemma. The danger is almost overwhelming ; still there is some hope. Therefore it is a crisis. The hope must become a confidence. Never in history has man's ingenuity been put to a greater test. Man will have the courage to decline the security of slavery, in one form or another, only by regaining faith in himself. The civilised world can survive the crisis of our time inspired by the philosophy of a New Humanism.

When we wish to contribute to the development of the new philosophy, we do not claim any revelation. Everything new grows out of something old. Taking advantage of the entire store of human knowledge and drawing upon the entire history of thought, the new philosophy, the need for which we are feeling, can be deduced from the currents of human thought ever since the dawn of civilisation. The crisis of our time is the result of an inability to appreciate the great human heritage, to differentiate between its abiding and transient values. The elements of stability, of unity, of uniformity, ideals pursued ever since the appearance of *homo sapiens*, should be the foundation of a new philosophy. A philosophy thus founded will have no difficulty in solving the complicated problems which have been baffling conventional philosophers. The solution however will not be just theoretical, it will come from action inspired by the new philosophy.

Ever since the ancient thinkers abandoned physical enquiry for metaphysical speculation, philosophy was vitiated by the fallacy of dualism. Modern science finally enabled Materialism, a naturalist system of ideas, to conceive a monistic picture of the world. If the Universe is a cosmos, it is arbitrary to break it up into matter and mind. A monistic naturalism does not allow evolutionary ethics to distinguish a world of values from a world of facts. A monistic philosophy cannot have a dualist ethics. Values are *sui generis*; they are born in our conscience; they are not deduced from facts; they *are* facts.

All the religious philosophers of the Middle Ages were frank dualists. The rationalist rebels against theology—Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant—also could not get out of the vicious circle of dualism. Entangled in that vicious circle, you cannot conceive of man being free. In the context of a dualist philosophy, the only logically consistent ideology which can offer security is religion, and the religious man must always bow before the will of God or the moral law of a teleological order. Morality is equated with absence of freedom.

The ultra-modern empiricists also are essentially religious men; they declare that everything beyond the reach of direct experience is metaphysical, or non-physical. From an apparently scientific premise, they deduce a neo-mysticism which goes to the extent of denying man's capacity to know anything outside his own body. The world is veiled in an impenetrable mystery, and in every dark corner a god can be easily imagined. The neo-mysticism of the ultra-modern empiricists instals God on the throne of man's ignorance.

In the realm of biology, the famous "missing link" is the mainstay of a dualist philosophy which valiantly defends the long lost cause of religion. Man rises out of the background of an inanimate world. The theory of descent may trace his origin to the most primitive organism. But there the chain of evolution breaks. How can life emerge from dead matter? That is the challenge of modern "scientific" dualism. Eminent biologists have taken up the challenge and their answer, based upon empirical knowledge, should satisfy philosophers having no axe to grind. The chemical composition of protoplasm being known, the imaginary unbridgeable gulf between the *organa* and *inorgana*

disappears. Even if empirical evidence and experimental data were really absent, the neo-vitalism of the ultra-modern philosophers should be logically ruled out.

What is the source of life, if it is not matter? The breath of God. Whoever falls back upon that venerable fundamentalism, can hardly pass as a philosopher; and any other answer would suffer from the fallacy of something coming out of nothing. If the religious dogma of creation by an almighty God is not offered in support of a "scientific" philosophy, then life appearing as a novelty out of dead matter has to be recognised as an empirical fact, corroborating the logic of monistic Materialism. There is a red thread of continuity running through the entire process of evolution—organic as well as inorganic.

The veil of mystery lifted from the origin of life, man is to be regarded as a biological phenomenon; no human trait or behaviour needs to be referred to any extra-physical source for explanation. Instincts and intuition are not mystic categories to be regarded as elementary indefinables. The "soul" is not a spark of the divine light; as the sum total of the intellectual and emotional excellence of man, it can be more appropriately called the touch of humanity. Conceived otherwise, the soul is a fiction. An axiology built on the foundation of the exact knowledge of the biological phenomenon called man deduces all values from one supreme value. Thus dispelling the confusion of academic moral philosophy, materialist monism alone can blaze a new trail for modern mankind. Applied to the problems of social existence, it can be called New Humanism.

What is the supreme value? One could almost say it is existence. But let us not run the risk of being identified with the ultra-modern cult of Existentialism, which with all its extravagances may not be altogether barren. However, I regard freedom as the supreme value, from which all human values are derived. Freedom is the supreme value because the urge for freedom is the essence of human existence; and it is never in the danger of being mystified because it can be traced all the way down the process of biological evolution; indeed it is coincident, if not actually identical, with life. Since all ethical values are derived from the soulless animal-heritage of man, they need no sanction which transcends human existence. Morality is a

human attribute of animal heritage. To be moral, one need only be human ; it is not necessary to go in search of a mystic, if not divine, sanction. Man need not be a slave of God or of his own prejudice (as in the case of modern moral philosophers) to be moral. Humanist morality is evolutionary.

The function of life is to live. The basic incentive of organic becoming is the struggle for survival. It goes on throughout the long process of biological evolution, until in man it becomes the conscious urge for freedom—the supreme human value.

The beginning of man's endless struggle for freedom lies in the animal struggle for survival. Everything that man has done, everyone of his acts, cultural progress, scientific achievements, artistic creations—everything has been motivated by that one urge. Man is finite while the Universe is infinite, and his environment, in the last analysis, is the whole Universe. Consequently, his struggle for freedom is eternal ; he can never conquer the Universe. Therefore, the urge for freedom is the only eternal thing in the human world. This urge enables man to acquire knowledge ; he conquers his environment by knowing. In that process he solves another problem : What is truth ? It is the content of man's knowledge. Truth is a value ; but it is not deduced from facts ; it is a fact, because it is objectively real. Quest for freedom, knowledge, truth—that is the hierarchy of humanist axiology. Our values are not autonomous deities ; they are inter-related, logically as well as ontologically. Therefore, we say that freedom cannot be attained by immoral means, nor will an enlightened man be a liar. Freedom, knowledge, truth are values to be appreciated together by living them.

Humanism is an old philosophy. Humanists have always approached all problems of life from the assumption of the sovereignty of man. But man remained unexplained, veiled in mystery. Now we know approximately what makes man a man, what is the source of his sovereignty, his creativeness. It is his capacity of knowing, as distinct from the common biological property of being aware ; and knowledge endows him with power—not to rule over others, but to create for the benefit of the race, and pursue the ideal of freedom further and further. As the content of knowledge is truth, the enlightened man finds in himself the sanction of the moral values cherished by him. The

humanist mission, therefore, is the pursuit of knowledge and dissemination of knowledge already acquired.

To come back to what I stated in the beginning, I do not start with any *a priori* idea about the crisis. I do not look for it in the art and literature of our time, in the crumbling personality of sensitive people. That is a symptom of the crisis; but it is a minor symptom, a by-product. We must see how the crisis affects the life of civilised mankind as a whole. Intellectual and institutional equipment cannot cope with the requirements of the time. The way out cannot be a choice between two authoritarianisms; we must find a third alternative. The prophets of a revival of the teleological view of life as the only way to bring man back to his moral moorings, preach spiritual authoritarianism as against the temporal brand. Their remedy may be more dangerous than the disease they propose to cure.

It took mankind centuries to revolt against the spiritual slavery which was the result of the original sin of ignorance. The standard of the revolt of man was carried forward during another several centuries by scientists and philosophers who were wisely guided in their thinking by science and hence built up a philosophy, not of airy speculation, but on the solid foundation of positive knowledge. Eventually, a point was reached where old theories and modes of thought seemed to be challenged by experience. The tradition of religious thought, of the easy way of faith, has been lying dormant under the surface of modern culture. It took advantage of the opportunity and went over to the offensive when scientists were puzzled and philosophers non-plussed. The structure of scientific knowledge, however, was not so very unstable as to collapse on the first offensive of an atavistic prejudice. Its weakness resulted from over-specialisation.

Different branches of science had surveyed various aspects of nature. The object of each branch of scientific knowledge was not the whole of reality. The fallacy was to make the partial view of physics, for example, a picture of the whole of reality. That picture was to be sought in an integration of knowledge acquired by the different branches of science. To build that picture of reality was the function of philosophy. But academic philosophy, except in the short period of Enlightenment, had

never fully broken away from religious or metaphysical traditions. Therefore, it failed when the time came for it to take over the leadership of human progress. The root of the crisis of our time is to be traced in that failure of philosophy to justify itself. Therefore I call it an intellectual crisis; intellectually bankrupt men are naturally demoralised. Having lost faith in themselves, they project their moral crisis on to the world.

Scientific agnosticism preached by modern scientific philosophers, ever since Mach and Poincaré and down to Bergson, deprived man of his distinction from other biological forms—the capacity to know. Fortunately, sophisticated philosophies leave the bulk of mankind untouched, which have not joined the stampede of the intellectual elite back to the illusive security of obscurantism and mysticism, under the leadership of prophets who declare that man cannot be moral unless he accepts spiritual slavery. They would scorn any philosophy which is not cast on their obscurantist pattern. But words have meaning; once we get involved in the mazes of their jargon and tendentious terminology, we shall be lost; we shall betray the humanist mission.

What is clear in our minds can be expressed in clear and plain words. We must speak the language of the people, look at problems from their point of view, from the experience of daily life. Scientific knowledge and its significance for them can be brought to them in simple language. The old theories of the nineteenth century may be naive for the highbrow who cannot see the relation between science and life. Steam still creates power; electricity can be harnessed for the benefit of man; medicine cures and prevents disease; biology explains a whole lot of things of daily experience; Darwinism is still to go to the masses, particularly in backward countries; psychology throws light on the mysteries of mental life. The people, particularly in our country, require this kind of knowledge; it will give them a sense of power, the power to do, to act; their moral stamina will be reinforced in proportion as knowledge liberates them from the traditional bondage of ignorance fostered on the authority of religion.

Nor is it necessary for the people to grasp the intricate problems of sociology; the breakdown of the economic system is a matter of their daily experience. It is not necessary for them

to understand economic theories. They experience want in the midst of plenty. Once they are made conscious of their experience, they will feel the need for a reconstruction of the present state of affairs. Political problems can be made similarly accessible to them through their experience. Finally, we shall show them how they can take things in their own hands. But all these seemingly easy steps presuppose man's faith in himself. They will gain that faith in the experience of doing things.

The crisis is a creation of those people who were to lead mankind. They have failed. A mighty resurgence of the common men and women only can save modern civilisation. To inspire that resurgence, organise it, guide it to fruition—that is the mission of a New Humanism of our time.

CHAPTER II

TWENTIETH CENTURY SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES*

Critique and Alternative

IN moments of crisis men's thinking capacity is put to test. There is a worldwide search for the causes and a way out of the present crisis. A crisis as deep as the present, calls for an entirely new outlook, a new philosophical orientation. Of course, there can never be such a thing as an entirely new philosophy. There is a continuity in the history of philosophic thought, which has been evolving ever since the dawn of civilisation. In various stages of that process of evolution, epoch-making contributions have indeed been made, from time to time. Those contributions mark the stages and emergence of various systems or schools of philosophy.

This process can be divided very roughly into three big periods. The period of religious philosophy or theological thought ; the period of naturalist philosophy, associated with the development of modern science since the days of Copernicus, Galileo and Newton ; and finally, in our time, there developed what is called social philosophy, that is, the attempt to apply the results of abstract thinking to the solution of problems of social existence of the human race.

But there was one continuous under-current of generally evolving ideas throughout the successive stages of the development of philosophical thought, common to them all, and of a cumulative and abiding value. However we may respond to the present crisis, we can be moved and inspired in our thinking only by linking up with that heritage of human civilisation. In so far as we can appreciate that heritage, in so far as we can recognise the abiding values of human civilisation, will it be possible for us to react to the present crisis effectively and make our own contribution, be it large or small, to the solution of its problems.

* Lecture delivered at Calcutta University on Jan. 31, 1947.

And through this effort, going on all over the world, and in which we are participating, we may contribute to raise human thought onto a higher level and open up a new vista of human progress.

We see the way out of the contemporary crisis in a philosophy of Humanism in the tradition of philosophical Radicalism. But the New Humanism is in certain respects clearly distinct from the philosophy of Radicalism of the 18th and 19th centuries. Certain terms and expressions are usually associated with particular ideas, and when, for want of new terms and new symbols suitable to new ideas, we use the old words, confusion may be created, at least temporarily. Such confusion of terms can prevent clear thinking.

For this reason, and to avoid this danger, we found it necessary to distinguish the radical philosophy of Humanism, which I believe must result from an intelligent reaction to the crisis of our time, through a qualification in its name which expresses in what respect these ideas are different from the philosophy of Humanism and from the Radicalism of past centuries, although, because of the continuity of philosophical thought, there naturally is a large element of similarity. Hence the designation of Scientific or Integral Humanism, or Radical or simply New Humanism.

The outstanding distinction is that 20th century Radicalism is humanist, whereas the philosophical Radicalism of the 19th century, even if it laid great emphasis on individualism, for all practical purposes placed the collectivity above the individual. In that sense, the philosophy of Radicalism of the 19th century, although it appeared to be in the tradition of the earlier Humanists, actually broke away from that tradition, and hence did not ultimately succeed in commanding decisive adherence from the intelligent section of civilised humanity.

The philosophy of Radicalism embraces all branches of philosophy. But we are here concerned with Radicalism as a social philosophy, that is to say, the philosophy of 20th century Radicalism applied to the social problems of our time. As a social philosophy, Radicalism has for its point of departure the venerable dictum of Protagoras who, in a critical moment of antique civilisation, declared that man is the measure of all things.

In spite of the great advance of scientific knowledge since the days of Protagoras, no greater wisdom has been acquired since then.

Proving that this is not an anachronism, but a manifestation of the continuity of human thought, the prophet of modern collectivism, Karl Marx, began by expounding his own social philosophy less than a century ago, with a very similar proposition, namely, that man is the root of mankind. If we make this proposition the point of departure for the social philosophy of Radicalism in our time, we come up against a problem which had been baffling political thinkers ever since the days of Plato—the problem of reconciling the individual with society, of bridging the conflict between man and State.

The reason that this apparent contradiction has proved to be so confusing is that State and society are often confounded. Of course, the more consistent and profound political thinkers have always differentiated these two forms of man's collective existence. But in current political thought, the distinction is not always borne in mind. As a result, a good deal of confusion has been created, and that confusion makes the problem of reconciling State and individual, the individual human being with his society, even more difficult of solution.

The basic fact is that society is the creation of man. Society did not precede the appearance of man. Men appeared on earth as individual beings. The struggle for survival with their combined efforts resulted in the organisation of society. The logical corollary of this view of the origin of society is that, since society was created by man for his own benefit and free development, social organisation, however complicated it may be, even the social organisation of our technological age, must make it possible to help every man as an individual to unfold all the potentialities latent in him.

I believe that the object of all political thinking, the object of social philosophy as well as of political practice, is to ensure the freedom of the individual in society. But when we come to examine the relation between the individual and the State, we are dealing with a different problem. The State is not necessarily identical or coterminous with society. At the same time, if the State is to be regarded as the political organisation of

society, as it should be, then there is no reason why the State should not be coterminous with society. And if the State can be coterminous with society, the conflict between man and State should be no more difficult of solution than the apparent contradiction between the individual and society.

Democracy has been pursued as an ideal for a long time. But before it ever had an effective chance to be practised, people are beginning to question whether democracy is at all possible. As a matter of fact, democracy appears to be a widely discredited concept today. Yet, I think that democracy remains a desirable ideal, and that it will be possible and practicable in proportion as the State will become coterminous with society. So long as the State is not coterminous with society, it remains an instrument of power in the hands of some section of society. And when power is concentrated in the hands of any minority or any section, it necessarily becomes an instrument of coercion, and democracy becomes impossible.

That, in my opinion, is the fundamental problem of political and social philosophy : to achieve that the State does not remain an instrument in the hands of some particular section of society or other, but to make it coterminous with society as a whole in ever increasing measure.

Although the problem of reconciling the apparent contradiction of man and State has occupied political thought ever since antiquity, the eclipse of the individual at the cost of growing emphasis on the State, first under theocracy, later in monarchies, yet later in parliamentary democracies, not to mention the modern dictatorships, is one of the outstanding features of history. The 19th century held out hope for the triumph of the individual. But the two concepts with which it was heralded were defective. They were, parliamentarism in the political field, and *laissez faire* in economics. Parliamentary democracy formally recognised the sovereignty of the individual, but in practice deprived all but a privileged few of effective use of that sovereignty. The sovereign individual became a legal fiction. For all practical purposes, most individuals were deprived of all power and even of their dignity.

In the economic field, the doctrine of *laissez faire* gave unbridled liberty to a small minority to exploit the vast majority



POLITICS POWER AND PARTIES

of the people everywhere. Free enterprise meant freedom of a few to exploit many. That being the practical manifestation of 19th century Radicalism—the political expression of which was Liberalism—it was bound to be discredited and lead to a new period of crisis.

In the critical moment, when this perspective became obvious, Socialism appeared on the scene and seemed to hold out the only hope for the majority of human beings. But Socialism frankly places the collectivity above the individual. Now, if society originated in the need of man to progress according to his inborn urge for freedom, with the help of the collective efforts of others like him; if society was created as an instrument to promote the progress of man as an individual, then Socialism or any collectivism should be regarded as an antithesis of the entire history of social evolution. But seeing that the line of social thought which had prevailed until towards the end of the 19th century appeared to be a blind-alley, the alternative line of socialist thought was welcomed by a growing number of people.

The result was that the individual was completely obliterated; man ceased to be the measure of everything. He ceased to count for anything. An imaginary collective ego, personified either by the nation or by a class, and in any case by the State representing the nation or the class, was set up as the seat of sovereignty in the place of man. The existence of the individual was recognised only in so far as its fulfilment was said to be found in being sacrificed on the altar of one or the other of those collective egos.

If the 18th and 19th centuries had held out great hope for one section of mankind, the early 20th century did so for another section of mankind, whose oppression and exploitation was now to come to an end. But if the optimism of the 19th century led to disappointment in the 20th century, the optimism of the early 20th century has brought us to a state of utter frustration in less than half a century. And this frustration appears to be enveloped in the thickest of gloom.

Grown up in this situation, all thinking minds must be perturbed. There is renewed heart-searching on all sides, and a conviction born of need is growing that new ideas must be conceived and formulated—new ideals must be placed before mankind, if it is to come out of the present crisis.

51

So long as Socialism continued in the tradition of 19th century Liberalism, it attracted a large number of adherents from among the best of men everywhere. But it could not succeed anywhere. Ultimately, Socialism had to advance the concept of dictatorship as antithesis to parliamentary democracy, if it was to have any chance of succeeding. Parliamentary democracy had failed to achieve its ideals. The experience of parliamentary democracy had in fact raised the question whether democracy was possible at all.

As people were losing hope in one form of political organisation, it was necessary to advance an alternative. The alternative advanced to the disappointing form of parliamentary democracy was dictatorship. Only after a certain section of Socialists came forward with that novel proposition, could Socialism gather strength. With that strength did it finally capture power in one country, and to many open minded people, it appeared that the world had at last emerged from the crisis precipitated by the failure and decline of 19th century Liberalism, and entered a new chapter of human progress.

But once we reject the idea of parliamentary democracy, the claim to dictatorship may be advanced from various sides. Therefore, the first reaction to the Russian Revolution was the rise of Fascism. The world entered into a conflict between two sets of reaction to the older form of political thought. The old form of political thought could no longer command people's adherence and they were now asked to choose between two forms of dictatorship. Whether we choose the one or the other, we shall have to say good-bye to the whole concept of democracy; we shall have to say that the whole evolution of political thought since Plato was a mistake, and we shall have to dismiss the individual as a fiction. We shall have to accept society as something given, an amorphous organism which has a collective ego, and sacrifice the constituents of society on the altar of that collective entity.

These fantastic and absurd ideas have been backed up by a certain superficial view of the development of modern physical science. It is pointed out that there was a time when the atom was considered to have, so to say, an individuality. Now it had been discovered not to exist at all. Perhaps at that time, that

11.7.05



could not be fitted into a monistic picture of physical reality, which appeared reduced to a continuous vibrating substance. But nothing comes out of that continuous vibratory substance unless some packets of waves are formed and again combine in the old discredited atom, even if with different attributes. The physical world could not grow unless this continuous vibrating substance differentiated itself into individual units. Therefore, to say that individual units have disappeared and we have only an amorphous mass; and since that is so in physical nature, there is no room for the individual in society either—that is rather a forced construction.

According to these theories, society is a collective entity and all social effort is collective effort. But does not collective effort logically presuppose the existence of cooperating individuals? Unless there are individuals to cooperate, cooperation would not be possible, and without cooperating individuals, no collectivity could have been conceived. So, from whatever side we look at it, the individual cannot be ignored in society without losing touch with reality and indulging in dangerous abstractions. How else to call it when the collectivists dismiss as fiction and abstraction the only concrete reality in sociology, that is, the living individual human being?

Since society consists of individual men and women, social welfare and progress must be the sum total of the welfare and progress of the individuals constituting society. We must revert to this fundamental proposition of political and social thought if we want to approach the baffling problems of our time with any chance of breaking out of the vicious circle of man and society, of who comes first and who is to subserve whom, and what is to be the criterion of a good society.

These collectivist ideas have had yet another consequence. They have resulted in a certain mental attitude, a habit of thinking, which completely disregards considerations of ethics, of morality in social behaviour. They have led to confusion about the relation of means and end. On the one hand, an end is made of the means. On the other, any means is believed to be good enough to achieve a desired end. For the last hundred years, a growing section of mankind had come to believe that Socialism, or Communism as it came to be called subsequently, is necessary

for establishing freedom and progress, and ultimately it came to be believed that Socialism or Communism as such is the goal. But why should Socialism or Communism be our goal? Presumably because we believe that under Socialism or Communism we shall have greater freedom and happiness. Thus it is obvious that Socialism or Communism is only an instrument, a means to an end, and not an end in itself.

Here we have come to the fundamental problem: What is the object of human existence? Raising the standard of living? Reorganisation of society? Replacement of Capitalism by a higher mode of production? Planned economy in the place of chaotic competitive free enterprise? All these may have their merits. But are they our ends? Or are they our means for something else and more important? Obviously, the latter is the case. And that alone supplies us the criterion for the appraisal of all those panaceas as means for the attainment of real ends. And I submit that the real end of all human endeavour is freedom.

In modern political thought, the concept of freedom has fallen in disuse, even in disrepute. A corollary of the eclipse of the individual as a fiction has been to characterise freedom of the individual as a fictitious abstraction, an illusion. Now, if freedom were an illusion, and could never be attained, then what ideal, what guiding notion is there to inform and direct human endeavour? Then, why search for solutions and new ideas at all? Let us be reconciled to live in the state where we are, guided by the law of a more or less civilised jungle.

If again we cast a glance back to the beginning of human civilisation, it is not at all difficult to see that the most basic urge of human existence is the search, the unending quest for freedom. This urge expressed itself at the pre-human level of biological evolution in form of the struggle for survival. When the very existence of the biological organism which came to be called man, was hemmed in on all sides by frightening natural phenomena threatening the new organism with extinction, the new species tried to free itself from those manifold dangers and threatening calamities, in order to continue to exist. In other words, existence was conditional upon the success of the biological organism called man in freeing itself from the pressures of its physical environments.

My contention is that the social struggle for human progress, the entire process of social evolution, is nothing but the continuation of the struggle for existence on a higher level, where that struggle is no longer guided by instinct and natural selection, but by intelligence, choice and reasoning.

Trying to explain human behaviour as the means for attaining the end of freedom, we shall immediately recognise a sense of direction in human history. Then only will human history begin to appear as something more than a meaningless chronological sequence of changing events. There is no reason to believe that any mere change represents progress. A succession of changes can be characterised as progress only if we can discern in every successive stage a direction, an approximation to a certain goal. And that cannot be proved unless we have a clear idea about the ends of human existence, and a criterion of progress.

Let us not be utopians. Ideals are never completely attained. We can only achieve a greater or lesser approximation towards an ideal. The end of the basic human urge is to approximate to the greatest possible extent the ideal of freedom. If freedom is defined as the progressive elimination of all restrictions on the unfoldment of the potentialities latent in man, it ceases to be an abstraction, and can be intimately and concretely related with the daily affairs of human life.

Therefore, Radical Humanism says that no social philosophy can claim to have an evolutionary or progressive significance unless the social construction proposed by it will make it possible for individuals to unfold their potentialities and to enjoy, actually and increasingly, all those benefits of social well-being and progress which it proclaims and pursues as its end.

There is a political corollary to this proposition. Previously, those who rejected parliamentary democracy did so on the ground—and it was a valid ground—that through parliamentary democracy political power was monopolised by a small class of people with certain economic privileges. Consequently, as long as the majority of people was deprived of the power which goes with those privileges, the sovereignty which in parliamentary democracy is supposed to rest in the people, never really belonged to the people, in such a way that they could have made use of it.

The ideologists of the new class of proletarians went one step further and said that the virtual dictatorship of one class, which was a minority, monopolising the power under parliamentary democracy should be replaced by the actual dictatorship of another class, which was supposed to form the majority of society. This proposition was backed up by a very plausible and attractive argument, namely, that dictatorship should be merely a transition stage. One class should capture power with the object of abolishing all other classes, or rather all classes as such, and in doing so it could hardly be called a dictatorship, being the dictatorship of the poor and exploited majority of the people. Together with the classes, the dictatorship also would disappear, and the State as such, that instrument of coercion, wither away in the end.

On the face of it, that appeared to be a plausible proposition. But in practice it proved to be bristling with the most appalling difficulties and contradictions. First we come up against a serious psychological problem, which can be formulated in the question: Is it possible for any government, not to mention a dictatorship, be it of a class or any other kind, or even of a hypothetical classless or super-class dictatorship, ever to divest itself of power voluntarily and wither away?

What happens after the exploited working class captures power? The economic structure of society would be remodelled; society would cease to be divided into property-owning and dispossessed classes, and consequently, in the end, there should be no necessity any more for any class to exercise its dictatorship. If things would take place in this ideal and simplified way, it might be very desirable. But experience has shown that that process does not take place automatically. It does not take place at all in this way, and that is so because there is a logical flaw in this theory.

This theory is part of what is called Marxism. According to Marxism, dialectics is believed to be the spring of all progress. Dialectics is process by contradiction. Applied to society, dialectics means that the contradiction between classes is the cause of all social progress. Karl Marx went to the extent of saying that human history is the history of class struggle.

Now, if we visualise that after the establishment of Socialism

or Communism classes will disappear, what will be the logical corollary to that in terms of dialectics? Dialectics itself would cease to operate, and social progress would come to a standstill! So, if we are consistent dialecticians, we shall have to say that, on the attainment of Communism, humanity commits suicide; because if mankind does not progress any more, if there is to be no further room for social evolution, then there is stagnation, and under conditions of stagnation life disintegrates.

As that theoretical deduction from a certain Marxian hypothesis could not be corroborated by the actualities of life, social development did not take place as predicted by Karl Marx, even after the working-class captured power and established its dictatorship in one sixth of the earth. Perhaps society there will now no longer be divided into economic classes characterised by the possession of private property in the means of production. But it will yet be divided into other types of classes with other specific characteristics acquired on a different basis, and there will in consequence be other kinds of tensions and contradictions. The struggle has not come to an end. If dialectics reflects any sort of reality, it will continue to operate.

From whatever side you look at it, Socialism or Communism are only means to an end, not ends in themselves. If that is so, then we shall have to see why people want Socialism or Communism. If they want it for the reason and with the object of attaining freedom, and if it does not serve that purpose, we don't want it at all. Once we say that, then we shall have a standard by which to measure progress. For instance, it will not be enough for us to know that in some country or other the working class has risen in revolt, overthrown Capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and established its own dictatorship in order to reorganise society. We do not take an uncritical view of the facts, because these facts by themselves do not represent an ideal position nor even a position approximating our ideal. But how are we to measure that a progressive change has actually taken place in consequence of those events, and whether a socialist system is truly a progress over capitalist society?

The criterion is whether the human individuals are enjoying greater freedom in socialist society than they had in capitalist society, whether they have greater opportunities to free them-

selves from all restrictions on the unfoldment of their potentialities than they used to have under the old order. If that standard is not applied, then we may simply make the experience of one form of social organisation in which the individuals were deprived of freedom, or not given adequate opportunities to approximate freedom, being replaced by another form of society which will not be essentially any better than the older system, and in some respects may be worse.

During the last hundred years, all changes have more or less represented that kind of oscillation, and this peculiar feature of modern civilisation has had as a result general frustration, and a total lack of self-confidence and hope in any brighter future of humanity. All "isms" are disbelieved; instead of a healthy scepticism, we find a cynical contempt for ideas and absence of ideals. The result is cultural crisis, intellectual stagnation, moral degeneration and a general atmosphere of frustration and despair.

In this situation, all who have faith in the potentialities of man, who refuse to think that human beings should never have come down from the trees where their animal ancestors were quite content—courageous men and women, with self-confidence and vision, must apply themselves to some hard thinking, because there must be a way out of this crisis, and that way can be found.

Our search for a way out of the crisis of our time has resulted in what we have called the principles of Radical Democracy*. As the name Radicalism implies, we want to go to the root of things. It is misleading to take society as something given. The root of society is man. We must go down to the root—to man himself, and find out what is necessary for man, and what should be done in order to give man the opportunity to unfold his potentialities, this being the content of his basic urge for freedom.

It goes without saying that physical existence is the basic precondition of social existence. In the present world, the vast majority of mankind cannot satisfy the elementary necessities of physical existence. Unless that is ensured, unless adequate physical existence is guaranteed to every man, woman and child, there

* See *Annexe*.

is no use talking of developing their potentialities. It is also recognised that under an economic system which has already broken down in most parts of the world, and which has plunged the world into two devastating world wars, that cannot be done.

The world must be economically reorganised. Not only the Socialists or Communists, but the Capitalists also have recognised that fact and are trying to adjust themselves to the new reality. But even a more egalitarian economic reorganisation by itself will not produce the desired result, unless it is accompanied by the largest measure of political democracy. And that depends on the possibility of the diffusion of power in a State which will be coterminous with entire society. The State being the political organisation of society, the widest diffusion of power makes it coterminous with society.

In this sense, we have tried to visualise and draw the picture of a State which we have called a Radical Democratic State, which would, on the one side eliminate the inadequacies of formal parliamentary democracy and, on the other, beware of the dangers of dictatorship of any class or elite. A major problem to be solved in such a State was how to reconcile economic planning with individual freedom, and politically, with the largest measure of direct democracy. The problem arises because large States are not likely to disappear, and some degree of economic planning is indispensable in the modern world. Judging from the experiences made with economic planning elsewhere, it appears to be an impossible task.

But I do not think that human intelligence should abdicate and admit defeat so easily. If planning is indispensable for economic progress, if without planning a rational modern economic system is not possible, and if it were found to be irreconcilable with individual liberty, then planning might perhaps create a golden prison, a stream-lined stable—but would that be worthwhile? Planning is necessary for economic sufficiency, but ways and means must be found to make economic planning consistent with political democracy, to have both economic sufficiency and individual freedom. It is a challenge to human ingenuity and creativity, and we must take it up.

It has become a commonplace to say that political democracy is not possible in an atmosphere of economic inequality.

The corollary to that would appear to be that economic equality is not possible in the absence of political democracy. If it is logically reconcilable, then it should also be practically possible. We have tried to solve the problem in two documents.

One is a *Draft Constitution of Free India*, which contains the structure of a Radical Democratic State in which power will remain vested in the people and the practice of delegation of power be eliminated; that is, every single adult can take direct and active part in the day to day administration of the country and remain in exercise of his sovereignty by having full understanding and control over what is going on even in the higher, most central administrative organs, which are reduced to a minimum. The economic aspect of Radical Democracy has been developed in the *People's Plan for Economic Development*. The formulations in these draft documents are tentative. They are no blue-prints and they are of such a nature that the changes they incorporate can be introduced without capturing power. Any individual or group of individuals can make a beginning under any established order—the only precondition is a change in outlook, an appreciation of the democratic way of life, which is part of a philosophical revolution. The so-called spiritual or idealist philosophies have brought the world to its present state. The collectivist ideologies have wrongly been attributed to materialist philosophy. But philosophical Materialism is a more rational and consistent system of philosophical thought than other schools of philosophy. If the object of philosophy is to explain nature, explain existence, explain the world, and if for explaining the world we have to go beyond the world into regions of which nothing is and can be known, that would not be an explanation. Materialism is the only philosophy which has tried to explain the world without having to transcend this physical universe. A reasonable philosophy cannot possibly have unreasonable results as its logical consequence unless it is misinterpreted and misapplied.

For a more rational reconstruction of the social order of this world, we should not have to break away from a materialist philosophy. On the other hand, certain ill-conceived formulations of some aspects of materialist philosophy have vitiated its social thinking. For instance, one fallacy of the social theory of

materialist philosophy is the economic interpretation of history, or Economic Determinism. The climax of this line of thought is to declare that all ideologies, philosophies, art, cultural values, and ethical systems have no objective existence of their own, but are mere super-structures of economic relations, or to be more precise, connected with the means and modes of production, determined by them and meant to perpetuate them by giving them moral or spiritual sanction.

Apart from the inadequacy of this appraisal of ideas and cultural values, this has led to notions of ethical relativism which have played havoc in our time. All the ethical relativists swear by the concept of the Economic Man, which derives its sanction from Economic Determinism. But curiously enough, this concept belongs to the bourgeois Radicals, to those Liberals whom all the collectivists condemn. They have rejected bourgeois Liberalism, but they have taken over its basic concept, the Economic Man.

If we want to put man in the centre of the stage and measure all social progress by the degree of progress and freedom enjoyed by the individuals in society, we shall have to discard this vulgar concept of the Economic Man and replace it by the concept of a Moral Man, a man who can be moral because he is rational. This can be done consistent with materialist philosophy. Materialism does not really discard epistemological Idealism, or idealist epistemology. It points out that ideas are not born by themselves in the air, irrespective of man's physical existence. On the contrary, it traces ideas to the common denominator of physical existence. But at the same time, intelligent Materialism refuses to run counter to the accumulated store of scientific knowledge by denying an objective reality to ideas, by denying the dynamics of ideas, once they are conceived by men.

Therefore, philosophically, 20th century humanist Radicalism proposes to make a synthesis between the history of material progress and the dynamics of ideas, regarding the development of ideas also as a process: once ideas are created, they have a logic of their own, and go on serving as incentive for further development, including the dialectics of economic development. These two parallel lines which go throughout history are continually influencing each other, new ideas leading to new material developments, and material developments giving rise to new ideas.

I believe such a synthesis is possible.

Philosophy could not claim the honour of a science, which it does claim, unless it was monistic, unless it could cover all the various aspects of life under its logical system of thought. To my knowledge, only materialist philosophy can substantiate that claim. The synthesis which is possible on the basis of philosophic Materialism, in so far as it recognises the objective validity of ideas, provides a new philosophy which can satisfy the modern man. With this new philosophy it should be possible to convince even the more intelligent among the followers of Karl Marx, if they really know their Prophet.

The last of Karl Marx's famous *Theses on Feuerbach* was that until now philosophers had only interpreted the world in different ways; now had come the time for philosophers to remake the world. It is possible that the world can be remade in various ways. But if the standard is that of freedom to be enjoyed by individual human beings, then we are interested only in that way which will lead to such freedom, and to achieve that we must have a philosophy to guide us on that way. Such a monistic materialist-realist philosophy leads in the sphere of social theory to a Humanist Radicalism, or Radical Humanism. It recognises the dynamics of ideas and the decisive role which the dynamics of ideas has played throughout the entire history of social evolution, and reconciles these with the dialectics of economic and social development.

Twentieth century philosophical Radicalism is scientific Humanism, which takes over the tradition of the founders of modern civilisation, the tradition of the revolt of man against the tyranny of God and his agents on this earth. There being a direct connection between Humanism and Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, which can be called the quintessence of Marxism, Radicalism emphasises the humanist aspect and origin of Marxism when tracing its own genealogy, and in its attempt to salvage the positive elements in preceding schools of philosophy.

In doing so, Radical Humanism incorporates the positive contents of Marxism freed from the fallacies of its theory of revolution, from its postulation of dictatorship and from its greatest and basic fallacy of dismissing the freedom of the individual as a meaningless abstraction. In politics, Radical Humanism

points out that democracy can be possible, that economic planning is reconcilable with the freedom of the individual; that is to say, Radical Humanism tries to present itself as a philosophy which covers the entire field of human existence from abstract thought to social and political reconstruction. It is an attempt to evolve a system of thought which would be able to react effectively to the crisis of our time, which would be able to offer a more sensible approach to the problems which are baffling the modern world.

The hopeful feature of these efforts is that they can be taken up and spread by ordinary intelligent and decent men and women everywhere. In that process, the ideas necessarily will be perfected and worked out in greater detail to their logical conclusions and practical consequences, and thus they can take effect and go into the making of ever newer ideas and greater freedom in days to come.

CHAPTER III

THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY *

There are two sets of views regarding the relation between Individual and Society. Any discussion must be conducted on the basis of these two views. One view is to take society as given and then to find out the ways and means for adjusting the individual's relation to society. Society is given ; the individual is a part of society ; he lives in it. Therefore, to have a harmonious life, the individual must adjust himself to society.

The other view is just the reverse ; it regards the individual as the primary factor and society as the creation of man. Man created society for his purpose, and the logical corollary of this view is that social relations (political, economic, ethical, all the various kinds of social relations) must be adjusted so as to promote the purpose of the life of the individual.

The former point of view is more widely prevalent among the known social thinkers and theorists. Historically, it is also the older point of view ; it is the view held by most religions, being connected with the belief in creation : If the world was created at a particular point of time and the human being came on this earth as part of a providential scheme of which society is a part, then man has naturally very little to say in it, and has only to adjust himself to it. This point of view assumes an ultimately supernatural origin of society.

I share the other view, that society is the creation of man, because it is logically more consistent as well as empirically demonstrable. This view is based on the scientific theory about the descent of man : As soon as the human species came into existence, it felt the need for corporate life. In order to combat the forces of nature and defend themselves against various adversaries, primitive men felt the need to cooperate, and cooperation is a form of organisation. That is how society was created.

* Lecture delivered at the Seminary of the Friends' Society at Dehradun, April 27, 1952.

On the strength of this evolutionary view, we must reject the eighteenth century conception of Social Contract : as if once upon a time primitive human beings met in a kind of conference and entered into a contract by which social relations were henceforth to be governed. Just as the human species itself, social organisation also came into being in the early stages of the rise of man, perhaps by accidental circumstances, and in course of time evolved into more and more purposive and complex forms.

The fundamental question involved is about the purpose of human life. We must examine this question also in the light of positive verifiable knowledge. If human life has any kind of super-human or divine purpose, this cannot be known and does not come within the purview of a scientific discussion. The question about the purpose of human existence has to be examined in the light of what we know of the human being, and the question can be answered only on the basis of the known biological functions of the human organism.

Life by itself has no purpose. Only when life expresses itself through the highly complex human form and develops the manifestations of intelligence, will and consciousness, then we can attribute purpose to life. Therefore, the proposition is regarding the purpose of human life, not of life as such. To come to an agreement on this purpose is of great importance, because social organisation and the various social relations can be harmonious, stable and ethical only to the extent that these relations will promote the purpose of human life.

Although on the pre-human level life has no purpose, yet the roots of the purpose of human life can be traced in the sub-human biological evolution. The purpose of human life results from the characteristic feature of pre-human biological evolution, namely the struggle for existence. On the pre-human level, this struggle consisted in mechanical adjustment and natural selection. But after the appearance of the human attributes of will and intelligence, this struggle is carried on on a higher level, no longer by mechanical adjustment, but by intelligent choice, and the pursuance of that purpose presupposes judgment. Ultimately, the capacity of judgment is the basis of morality and all ethical values.

The struggle for existence on the human level, when carried

on according to a conscious will and intelligence, becomes the urge for freedom. The struggle for existence is a mechanical expression of that urge. The environments of a biological organism press upon it from all sides, and unless the organism was capable of struggling to free itself from the pressure of environment, survival would not be possible and life might have been extinguished soon after it generated.

On the higher human level, the struggle for existence becomes a conscious struggle for freedom. The creation of society itself was an expression of this urge. The various phenomena of nature, wild animals and other inimical forces would have destroyed the human species; the co-operative effort of the human species was necessary to free it from the danger of extinction.

Once the primitive human being was sufficiently differentiated from the animal ancestry to develop distinctive habits of diet, acquisition of food for subsistence could no longer be carried on by individual efforts as in the case of lower animals. Hunting and fishing, and eventually agriculture, had to be conducted with co-operative efforts. The negative necessity to assist each other against the attack of wild animals, and the positive necessity to ensure their livelihood, formed the basic urge which induced human beings to evolve the original civil society.

If these fundamental considerations are borne in mind, then we get a standard by which the relation between the individual and society can be guided. Society originated with the purpose of enabling the human being to conduct the struggle for existence with greater efficiency. As the human organism developed, the original need for procuring food and the instinct of reproduction were supplemented by various other more complicated human instincts and desires. Therefore, very early in the development of the human being as a part of society, the struggle for existence ceased to be analogous with the biological struggle for survival. In order to exist in society and build up a society which would help him to live and grow as an individual, the human being had to adjust himself to the needs and desires and sentiments of other human beings also.

Once civil society was formed, it had to be politically and economically organised, and society became more and more complicated. But the original purpose of it was that of helping man

to develop the potentialities inherent in him as a biological organism. As human life developed consciousness, will and intelligence, the requirements and purposes of human beings became increasingly diverse and covered a wider and wider range of his existence. Ultimately, the biological urge for existence developed into the conscious need of a human being to evolve his personality, his individuality.

If we take that view, then we have a measure to judge the moral validity or political justification or the economic equity of any social institution. A social organisation which inhibits the possibility of free development of the human personality is contrary to the original purpose with which human society was created. Therefore, there need be no contradiction between the fullest freedom of the individual and a harmonious social order. Such a contradiction results from the view that a social order is something over and above the individual, has a purpose of itself, and whenever the purpose of the individual conflicts with the imaginary purpose of the social order, there develops disharmony in society. The solution of the problem becomes more difficult in proportion as society becomes more and more complex.

To be able to develop his personality, the human being requires certain elementary things. He must have his physical existence ensured, and it is a matter of experience that, to the extent that the human being is freed from the necessity of diverting the larger part of his energy to gaining the prerequisites of his physical existence, to that extent the finer aspects of human life can develop. We see the difference between a primitive and a highly developed group of mankind in the leisure time it affords, after the effort necessary for maintaining physical existence as a precondition for the intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the human being.

That being so, the first purpose of any social organisation is to guarantee every member the prerequisites of physical existence, which covers the economic aspect of society. Thereafter, everybody being biologically endowed with a mind, the ability to acquire knowledge, this capacity has to be cultivated. The process of this cultivation leads to organised cultural and educational activities. That is the second purpose of a social order. When a large number of people live together, the development of

human beings being unequal, there is always the possibility of conflict, which may develop violent forms. Hence political organisation is always a necessity, but the purpose of the political organisation, i.e. the State, should be no more than to maintain conditions under which it will not be necessary for any man to kill another, or for communities or nations to attack each other for what one may possess and the other may lack.

Once conditions for peaceful existence and continuance of physical well-being as well as equal possibilities of acquiring knowledge and developing intelligence are created, the individuals should be left to themselves, with a minimum interference of the State in their social and personal existence and activities. Knowledge about what is called human nature enables us to trust to the correct judgment of free and fully developed human beings. This is another question on which there are differences of opinion and much confusion. But unless we are clear about what is the essence of human nature, we cannot arrive at a correct judgment on the relation between individual and society.

According to the view which traces human development on the highest level to the biological sub-soil of human existence, human nature is essentially rational. The original creation of society was a rational act. Perhaps a number of our predecessors, as yet hardly differentiated from their animal ancestry, struggling for existence against wild beasts, saw that all of them did the same thing and realised that, if they acted together, they could combat the common enemies with greater chance of success. That rational judgment led to the foundation of civil society.

This human instinct can be traced further down in the process of biological evolution. What is called instinct is only a primitive or rudimentary form of rationalism. Knowledge of the mechanism of biological evolution leads to the conclusion that human nature is essentially rational. But in course of time, various other views of life developed, which made men forget that it is in their nature to be rational. Judging by the fallacious assumption of primitive men that they could influence the forces of nature by propitiating gods of natural religions, to believe in super-natural powers appeared to be the fundamental trait of human nature. Consistent with that superficial judgment, the human being by itself was held to be incapable of judging what

is good and what is bad, the norms of which reposing in some divine laws. If that were so, a harmonious relation between the individual and society is not possible. If there is to be harmony, it will have to be by imposition and coercion. Only in a community fully and uniformly sharing certain beliefs, all being equally loyal to their beliefs, could there then be a harmonious society, but it will not be a free society. Because, if a member of that community suddenly began to doubt that any particular belief which he had been taught might perhaps not be true and wanted to examine it critically, he would immediately become an element of discord and the harmony be disturbed. To maintain harmony, his freedom must be curtailed or he will be expelled from that society. So, either society ceases to be harmonious or it disintegrates.

A harmonious relation between individual and society consistent with freedom is possible only when we start from the hypothesis, deduced from biological knowledge, that every individual is capable of rational judgment, and that the purpose of a social order is to allow every individual to develop that capacity. It is not possible to make a programme or blueprint for guiding the relation between individual and society. It will become harmonious in proportion as the individual grows as a free human being capable of making rational as well as moral judgments.

Morality, in the last analysis, is a matter of rational judgment, unless it is referred to something super-human. But then discussing social problems, we are leaving aside the practice of referring human problems to extra-human forces. Unless the ability of moral judgment was inherent in the human being itself, the fundamental urge of freedom cannot be fulfilled. Because then man must submit to certain rules or norms laid down for him by extraneous agencies. Man is not the judge; he cannot be good by choice, but only by conforming with certain rules and laws imposed on him.

The problem of morality can also be examined as a problem of social behaviour. If I am conscious of the urge for freedom, if I feel that, in order to develop myself intellectually, morally and spiritually, I need a certain social organisation in which other individuals will not encroach on my freedom, I shall immediately realise that I shall be able to have such a social organisation only

if I am prepared to guarantee the same things to the other members of society. This view comes very close to certain religious tenets enjoining a certain moral behaviour; but it is in proportion as man's ability to make rational judgment increases, his capacity to make moral judgment also increases. Therefore, instead of troubling ourselves with the problem of finding ways and means of adjusting the relations of individual and society under an unjust social order, we must tackle the problem at the root.

A society should be so organised as to guarantee to each of its members what he requires for the development of his personality, as an individual. There we come back to the two original views. If we take the view that society is given, and the members of a good society are good human beings and those of a bad society are bad human beings, then we have the impossible task of reforming society, leaving the individuals as they are.

Various social theories have been developed on this basis and most probably those views predominate today which hold that society must be reformed in order that individuals will become better. That view has been held since the dawn of civilisation, and it has not brought us very far.

A good society can be created only by good men. A rational society, a moral society only by rational and moral men. Since the potentialities of goodness and reason are in every human being, they can be developed. When we live in an oppressive social order, it becomes very difficult to do so. But the necessity to do so becomes all the greater. And if we look at the problem practically, barring the crassly dictatorial regimes, in a modern civilised social order, there is ample scope for the individual to develop as a free, intelligent moral being, if he wishes to do so.

But the wish is often lacking, because many think that they live in a society of thieves, and to succeed in such a society, a man must be a thief amongst thieves. The criterion is success. That is one way of adjusting individual relations with society. But that does not improve matters.

Eighteenth century Liberalism which wanted to create a good society by making good laws, also has not proved to be very fruitful. Because good laws can be effective only when they codify already accepted or acceptable modes of behaviour or rela-

tions. Therefore, I am of the opinion, that, to be able to live in peace with society and with ourselves, to behave morally and intelligently, depends very largely on the individual. Those who want to solve the problem of the individual's relation with society should apply themselves to the task of making more and more individuals conscious of their potentialities, convincing them that by birth they are capable of rational judgment, and therefore, also of moral judgment, and therefore of being free. A society composed of a significant number of such men, will be a rational and moral society.

CHAPTER IV

ETHICS AND POLITICS *

A re-examination of the different contemporary political theories—of the Right and of the Left, conservative and liberal, reactionary and revolutionary—reveals the disconcerting fact that in their practice there is little fundamental difference between them, because capture of power, irrespective of the diversity of means advocated for the purpose, is the common postulate of all political theories. The ensuing scramble for power has led to a progressive demoralisation of public life. Morality in public life, therefore, presupposes a political theory which would not make capture of power the precondition for any necessary social change ; and such a new political theory must be deduced from a social philosophy which restores man in the place of primacy and sovereignty. Morality being the dictate of conscience, it can be practised only by individuals. Without moral men, there can be no moral society. Until now, all the architects and engineers of new social orders have reversed the order : they all postulated an ideal order as the condition for the free growth of human personalities. The Liberals believed that the ideal of a good life could be attained by good laws. As against their "reformism", Socialists and later on Communists maintained that economic reconstruction on the basis of common ownership was the condition for human development. The result has been the eclipse of the individual by collectivities ; totalitarianism and dictatorship in political practice have been the corollary to collectivist social philosophies.

It is easy enough to place the individual in the centre of a social philosophy. As a matter of fact, individualism was the cardinal principle of the liberal social philosophy and political theory ; and Liberalism was the source of inspiration for the magnificent achievements of modern civilisation. But in practice, the principle of individualism was reduced to an abstract doctrine, the

* Published in the *The Radical Humanist*, March 2, 1952.

sovereign individual to a legal fiction. The decay of Liberalism encouraged the rise of various collectivist doctrines which denied the possibility of individual freedom, ridiculed the idea as an empty abstraction, and proclaimed that, in order to be free, the individual must merge himself in the mass ; in other words, find freedom in self-annihilation. If Liberalism had made a legal fiction of the sovereign individual, the socialist and communist conception of freedom is denial of freedom.

The cause of the decline of the liberal social philosophy was the ambiguity about the sanction of morality. It started with the excellent principle that the individual was a moral entity and, as such, sovereign. That is an ancient belief ; in Europe, Christianity popularised it : man is moral because he possesses the soul, which is a spark of the divine light of the universal moral order. In the beginning, that was an elevating idea ; inspired by it, European humanity threw off the thralldom of the patriarchal and communal organisation of the mediaeval social order. But the religious faith in man's moral essence limits his sovereignty ; indeed, it is a negation of the liberating concept. In the last analysis, it implies that man as man cannot be moral ; to be so, he must feel himself subordinated to a super-human power. With this paralysing sense of spiritual subservience, man can never be really free. Man's struggle against the doctrine of the necessity of his eternal spiritual subservience was the outstanding feature of the earlier stages of modern civilisation. Liberalism was born out of that struggle, which reached the high-water mark in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment represents its afflorescence.

The shock of the French Revolution frightened Liberalism out of its wits. Natural religion was opposed to Materialism, and the sanction for morality was traced to a transcendental moral order. As against the transcendentalism of the earlier nineteenth century moral philosophy, liberal social reformers and political theorists advanced the utility principle of morality. If in the former, ethical values were metaphysical concepts beyond the test of human experience, the latter deprived them of any objective standard, and that amounted to a negation of morality. Between the two, the civilised world was thrown into a moral confusion.

At the same time, the practice of parliamentary democracy and *laissez faire* economics reduced the individual to a helpless

position. The cumulative effect of moral confusion and social atomisation destroyed man's faith in himself. The collectivist ridicule of the idea of individual freedom corresponded with the experience of the bulk of the community. Having lost faith in himself, the individual welcomed the hope, offered by collectivist social philosophy, of finding security in the power of the masses. The human factor disappeared from politics. To sway the masses by appealing to base instincts and evil passions came to be the essence of political practice.

It is clear that moral philosophy itself must be placed on a sound basis before it can have a wholesome influence on social doctrines and political practice. The crucial question, therefore, is : What is the foundation of ethics ? Can man be moral by himself ? Until now, the prevailing opinion has been that man can behave morally only under compulsion, either supernatural or social. This view about the source of morality nullified the time-honoured belief that man is a moral entity ; but that belief must be resurrected, and freed from its original limitation, if a really revolutionary social philosophy is to prescribe a rational political theory and a moral political practice.

A great advance in this direction was made during the earlier centuries of the history of modern civilisation, when its pioneers made certain secular postulates about the nature of man and his place in nature. Their bold speculative thought, progressively reinforced by the expanding knowledge of nature, culminated in the scientific Materialism of the eighteenth century. The approach was humanist, which discarded the dogma of special creation and traced the origin of man in physical nature. Growing out of the background of a law-governed Universe, man must be a rational being ; as such, he establishes the original society as an instrument for the development of his personality. The revolutionary discoveries of biology in the nineteenth century bore out the speculative postulates and rational hypotheses of the earlier thinkers. But just at that time, the ambiguities and inadequacies of Liberalism set the civilised world adrift towards a moral confusion.

The confusion was more confounded at the turning of the century, when new discoveries of the physical sciences seemed to render untenable the classical concepts of substance and causality which were the corner-stone of scientific naturalism. A neo-

mysticism, claiming the authority of science, challenged the pretensions of Humanism. Not only the objective validity, but the reality of human knowledge was disputed. Exaggerated emphasis on epistemology confused cosmological and ontological thought. An intellectual crisis aggravated the moral crisis.

Psychology preached irrationalism on the authority of science ; in the garb of vague concepts, intuition, mysticism and transcendentalism returned to ethics. Man is irrational ; he is instinctively moved by the blind urges of dark forces ; therefore, the sanction of morality either in private or public life is the penal code and the police, or the priest. Except under the surveillance of these temporal and spiritual custodians of law and order, the law of the jungle would reign. The irony of our time is that the dreaded law of the jungle reigns supreme, nonetheless.

The only way out of this vicious circle is indicated by a moral philosophy which finds the sanction of its values in the rationality of the human being. But what is the sanction of the rationality of man ? What is Reason ? Is it again a metaphysical category, or a biological property ? In the former case, the problem of the sanction of morality is not solved by tracing it in rationality. That is only referring one problem to another. As an expression of the reason in nature, rationality can be regarded as a biological function, and physical determinism is the Reason in nature. Otherwise, the classical concepts of natural law and moral order are meaningless. Modern sciences, physical as well as biological, put a content of objective truth in those concepts which were originally hypothetical.

These trends of thought have a direct bearing upon the practical problems of contemporary society. The problems confronting the world of today are expressions of the crisis of our time ; they clearly call for a new social philosophy which allots a high place to morality in public life. The disgust with politics, that is, an unscrupulous scramble for power, and disapproval of economic exploitation of the majority by a minority, are no longer confined to the Left. They are shared practically by all. Leaders of political parties actually engaged in the struggle for power sanctimoniously condemn power-politics. Parties enjoying the patronage of the upper classes proclaim their intention to establish a classless society ; businessmen, big and small, call themselves

Socialists. One hears the cry for morality on all sides ; it has become incumbent on public men to talk of moral values.

Yet, there is little sign of improvement anywhere. The law of the jungle, scramble for political power and lust for economic loot reign supreme ; no single country can plead not guilty of the charge without laying itself open to the graver charge of telling the untruth.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that the absence of moral scruples in public life is generally deplored, that lip loyalty is pledged to moral values, is significant. If, in practice, politicians cannot be true to their profession, that is not necessarily a proof of dishonesty. They are caught in a vicious circle. Engaged in a game, one must play it according to the rules. The fault of moralising politicians is the failure to realise that, so long as power remains the object of political practice, it cannot be handicapped by irrelevant scruples, it must be guided by the dictum that the end justifies the means. Caught in the whirl, the best of men are bound to be pulled down the lowest depth, which may appear as the pinnacle of power.

The crying need of the time is to harmonise ethics with a social philosophy and political practice. The sovereignty of man, which must be the foundation of any revolutionary social philosophy, can be deduced only from the fact that man is a moral entity. It has been a time-honoured belief, which could not be sustained in practice ; now the belief must be replaced by the knowledge of the fact that man is moral because he is rational. The Universe is a moral order governed by laws inherent in itself. Man grows out of that background.

Ethics must be the foundation of the social philosophy which is the crying need of our time. In order to avoid the quicksand of transcendentalism and the pit-falls of relativity, ethics must be integrated in a general philosophy. We do not want to build yet another castle in the air, which will not stand the test of the next storm. A humanist ethics based upon a naturalist rationalism can be built only on the rock-bottom of a mechanistic cosmology and a physical-realist ontology. Therefore, we must begin by examining the problems raised by modern science. The next step is to find the connecting link between the world of dead matter and living nature. It is no longer a missing link ;

it solved the problem of the origin of life. If it is discovered that life originated in course of the mechanistic process of nature, human rationality can be deduced from the background of the law-governed physical Universe ; the imaginary gulf between physics and psychology is thus bridged and the most baffling problems of philosophy, the epistemological problems, are solved. Truth ceases to be a metaphysical concept ; it stands out as the content of positive knowledge. In the light of the basic nature of truth, the nature of other values is more clearly visible, and they can be rationally arranged in a proper hierarchy. Having thus obtained our moral values in the world in which man has his being and becoming, we shall be able to harmonise them with a social philosophy which indicates the humanist approach to the economic and political problems confronting the contemporary world.

CHAPTER V

A POLITICS FOR OUR TIME *

There is a growing realisation throughout the world that the political life of our time is not leading to the results which are the object of all modern democratic politics. That suggests the possibility of an alternative kind of political practice.

Any political practice logically presupposes a certain political theory. Consequently, when we want to evolve a politics suitable for our time, we shall have to be clear about its theoretical foundation as well as its practical application. The politics of our time outside the communist countries is generally considered to be democratic politics. Democratic freedom has been the political ideal of the modern world for more than a century and a half. As the development of mankind is not an even process, the political development of the modern world also has been uneven. Some countries have advanced towards democratic freedom more than others, while there are some still quite remote from the conditions of social development where democratic political practice becomes possible.

If we want to judge democratic political theory as well as practice pragmatically, we shall have to review the history of the countries where this political theory has been put into practice. Therefore, when a country like India which, after a long period of struggle for political independence, has attained a stage when it can adopt a political system and a political theory of its choice, and put it into practice according to its own peculiar conditions, we shall naturally have to review the history of the countries which have gone ahead of us on the road that we have chosen and learn from their experience.

Democracy today is no longer an unknown utopia. We do not have to learn its ways by the method of trial and error. We have the experience of many countries to go by, and if we find that democracy as conceived and practised during the last 150

* Lecture delivered on February 17, 1949.

years has not produced the desired results, we shall be well advised to think of other forms of democratic political theory and practice, and that may then be the politics of our time.

It is held by some Indian historians and political thinkers that democracy is nothing new to this country that it was practised in ancient India and also in other countries of antiquity. That is a controversial subject, and a matter of historical research. At any rate, modern democracy, as generally understood, and as it is being introduced in our country, is only a century and a half old, and it is a feature of what is called modern civilisation. Thus conceived, it is a contribution of modern Europe.

Democratic political theory, evolved out of a background of intellectual development since the 15th and 16th century, came to be applied in the 18th and 19th century in a number of countries. This modern democracy has its origin in the idea of individual liberty. It is believed that a democratic form of government, a democratic social order, is likely to afford the greatest measure of freedom to the individual. The measure of freedom actually enjoyed by individual men is the measure of freedom enjoyed by any society.

This point of departure was something very promising in the history of mankind. In that light, democratic political theory offered the greatest chance of freedom, in the political and social sense. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that, after 150 years of practice, democracy has not produced the result that it promised at the time of its appearance a century and half ago. There is a tendency to deduce from this undeniable fact that democracy is not possible, or that democracy is not the best possible form of political regime. These doubts raised by experience cannot be simply dismissed. Those who want to think of the possibilities of a better political system must examine these doubts, which are apparently backed up by the experience of several generations.

The assertion that democracy is not the best possible form of government can be logically admitted without any controversy, because no form of government, no single system of human organisation, can claim finality. If we believe in human progress, if we believe that human progress is the result of unlimited human creativeness and of the unfoldment of human

potentialities, then we cannot regard any political system or economic organisation or any social institution to be the ultimately best. We can only say that, at the moment, no better form can be conceived, or has been conceived.

Democracy means, etymologically as well as historically, government of the people and by the people. The fundamental principle of democratic political theory is that sovereignty belongs to the people. Since the people is the sovereign power, government by the people and of the people would naturally be the best possible government. Theoretically, this appears to be unchallengeable. Any alternative so far has started from a negation of the principle that sovereignty belongs to the people. Democracy was preceded by various forms of monarchist governments. At one time, kings ruled absolutely by divine right; later they were constitutional monarchs. No monarchy can admit the sovereignty of the people. The sovereign power was believed to rest in certain individuals who claimed the right either from some divine source or because of dynastic descent.

The alternatives to democracy from the other side are the various modern forms of dictatorship, which assert that people as a whole are not qualified to administer their own affairs; therefore, the responsibility and the right of ruling a particular community belongs to some specially qualified or ordained individuals or groups of individuals. By comparison, the democratic conception of popular sovereignty, according to which the people are qualified and entitled to rule themselves according to their own light and wishes, appears to be certainly better than either of the two other alternatives. Therefore, it is quite reasonable to conclude that the democratic form of government is at least theoretically the best form of government so far conceived, without excluding the possibility that, in course of time, men will evolve some still better form of governing themselves.

But, having made that impartial assessment of the value of democratic theory and practice in principle, we shall have to turn to the record of democracy in practical experience. And that record is certainly not too bright. If we examine that record closely, we shall discover that there developed a discrepancy between democratic theory and practice. The present condition of the world is the result of that contradiction. Having discovered

that contradiction, we shall have to ascertain if that contradiction can be eliminated, that is to say, if democracy can be practised according to its own theory.

Democracy started from the two admirable principles of individual freedom and of popular sovereignty. But having started from those unexceptionable principles, in practice democracy immediately deviated from those principles. We do not have to examine only the record of parliamentary democracy in the 19th century. We may go all the way back to the man who has been recognised in history as the prophet of modern democracy, to discover that democracy, however well conceived, was born with a crippling defect, because of which it never got a fair chance. That prophet was the French philosopher Rousseau, who is credited with having developed the ideal of democracy. Like all the leaders of the French Revolution, Rousseau also drew his inspiration from the experience of ancient Greece. ✓

The idea of democracy, including its name, was derived from there. The ideal of democracy, as the early leaders of the French Revolution conceived it, was the direct democracy of ancient Greece. There, democracy had been practised in small City Republics, inhabited perhaps by no more than ten to twenty-thousand people. Since it could not be practised in 18th century Europe, where States consisted of entire countries inhabited by millions of people, Rousseau immediately came up against this fact, which was irreconcilable with the practice of direct democracy as it had been practised in Greece; and yet, if democracy was ever to be practised, it must indeed be direct democracy, to the largest possible extent.

Hence it was necessary to find new ways and means to practise democracy. Rousseau was a man of great imagination. He was rather a dreamer and a poet than a political thinker. Giving reign to his imagination, he arrived at the conception of a General Will, and devised a system by which the General Will of a people could be ascertained. Any institution which could claim to embody the General Will, should be considered as a democratic institution.

Starting from the conception of individual freedom, Rousseau admitted that every member of a community had individual interests, and when in operation, the individual interests of all

the members of the community cancelled each other. But apart from their individual interests, according to Rousseau's theory of the origin of society in a social contract, the members of a community alienated their individual interests and pledged themselves to work for the common interest. Once individual interests have cancelled each other, there remains a residue of general interest based on the surrender of individual rights, and out of that surrender emerged the concept of the General Will.

This concept was fraught with dangerous consequences. When democracy was to be introduced in the post-revolutionary period, that is, after the defeat of Napoleon, this metaphysical concept of a General Will, interpreted in political terms, took the form of the delegation of power from the people to some other agencies. But already during the French Revolution, the dangerous significance of this doctrine of the General Will made itself felt, and it was on the claim that he represented the General Will of the French people that Robespierre tried to establish a dictatorship through the terroristic regime which practically destroyed the positive outcome of the French Revolution.

Some political theoreticians and thinkers of our time have, therefore, traced the origin of modern dictatorships, particularly the fascist form of dictatorship, to Rousseau's concept of the General Will. This metaphysical concept of General Will can indeed become the moral sanction of a dictatorship. But immediately after the French Revolution, when democracy came to be established in the 19th century, the difficulty of practising direct democracy was solved by the practice of delegation of power. Since the entire people of a large country cannot possibly directly participate individually in the administration, a system was devised by which the people constitutionally delegated their authority to a smaller group of people which ruled the country as custodians of the sovereign people and its power. This system has become known as parliamentary democracy. The only form in which democracy has been practised so far was based on this principle of delegation of power. ✓

Every individual is sovereign and has a right to choose the government of his country. Accordingly, elections take place periodically in which every individual can record his choice. The sovereign people, as electors, vote for some individuals, or for

some groups of individuals formed for the purposes of elections, called parties. The implication of this vote was to delegate his sovereign power to a group of individuals or some party, which became the repositories of the sovereignty for the period between two elections. Now, the practice of democracy shows that between two elections the sovereign people is nowhere in the picture and has absolutely no possibility of controlling those who are ruling the country on behalf of them; and consequently delegation of power, for all practical purposes, has become surrender of power. The people exercise their sovereignty by surrendering it from time to time. That was the basic contradiction of democratic practice. Because of this contradiction, democracy eventually became discredited and supplied plausible reasons for the rise of various forms of dictatorship.

So long as direct democracy will not be possible, there does not seem to be any alternative to indirect democracy, which is indeed a negation of the fundamental principle of democracy. Developments since the early 20th century seem to have made the possibility of direct democracy even more remote. On the basis of democratic principles and practice, all-powerful States have been founded and these all-powerful States today are in a position to ignore completely the wishes and the very existence of the people. Even at the time of elections the people cannot decide, cannot choose individuals according to their own intelligent judgment, but all have to vote for this or that party, often not knowing even the individuals who are candidates of these parties, and therefore are unable to judge and choose the men who are going to rule them.

In the earlier days of parliamentary democracy, for instance in England, individuals still appealed to the voters for their suffrage on their own merit. As a rule, the candidate belonged to the constituency and had been known to the electors, and the voters were in a position to judge whether the particular individual was qualified to have their confidence. While individual candidates appealed for the vote, there was some element of direct democracy. It was a relation between a group of voters and an individual. But later on when parliamentary practice led to what is known as the party system during the last fifty years or more, the individual completely disappeared from poli-

tics, whether as candidate for election or as elector. On the one hand, we have the mass of people, and on the other, we have parties. The individual man and his judgment, his discretion and will are nowhere in the picture. Appeals are not made to individual voters and their power of reasoning, but to the sentiment of masses. The purpose of election propaganda is to create a state of mass hysteria, to create either hatred for one or bias in favour of some other party. Consequently, when the time comes for the sovereign people to make the crucial decision of selecting persons who can be entrusted with their fate for a period of four or five years, the electorate is in a state where no discriminating judgment is at all possible, whipped up into a state of frenzy and driven like cattle to the polling stations to cast their votes. With music, brass-bands, flags and shouting, the judgment of the people is dulled and benumbed; they are placed under some spell, and in that condition they are asked to decide their fate. This is naturally more so in backward countries, but on principle it is the same everywhere.

On the other hand, when votes are canvassed for a party, once the popular vote brings a man to the parliament, his responsibility is not to the people who vote for him, but to the party machinery which has ensured his election by supplying the money and the brass-band.

As a result of these practices over a long period of time, modern parliamentary democracy has degenerated into a scramble for power among party machineries. Different parties approach the people with the claim to represent them more faithfully than others, to be better defenders of popular interests and aspirations, and therefore ask for the vote of the people. Under the best of circumstances, these parties alternate in power and divide the government between themselves. Government of the people and by the people is completely forgotten and has been replaced by government for the people; in other words it is not a really democratic form of government.

The first criticism of this formal democracy was offered by Socialists. From the time of Karl Marx, they pointed out these defects and deficiencies of parliamentary democracy, and came to the conclusion that parliamentary democracy degenerated in this way not because of its internal contradictions or the discre-

pancy between theory and practice, but because it is only an instrument for one particular class to establish its dictatorship. The corollary suggests itself logically : Since formal democracy is the dictatorship of one class, therefore the other classes or the class which are suppressed and exploited are entitled to overthrow the dictatorship of the oppressing and exploiting class and establish its own dictatorship. In course of time, this alternative came to be advocated by the "revolutionary" communist school of Marxists ; the "reformist" Socialists, however, did not accept it and maintained that dictatorship was not inherent in Karl Marx's teachings.

By advocating dictatorship as an alternative to a defective form of democracy, Marxist critics did not maintain that democracy was not desirable, but only that its bourgeois parliamentary form was defective. But that was not a sufficiently strong argument for maintaining that an out and out dictatorship is better than a veiled dictatorship or a defective democracy. The argument was, however, taken up later by another opposition to, or revolt against, democracy, which also offered dictatorship as the alternative. That school pointed out that under the democratic system government became weak. In course of time, many parties appear on the scene ; there are continuous elections because in no parliament can any particular party have a clear majority any more ; coalition governments have to be formed in which the various parties quarrel among themselves, which leads to frequent cabinet crises ; one government after the other falls and new elections take place in quick succession. There follows a state of political instability and growing threat of a breakdown of the State machinery, a weakening of public morality and insecurity of society.

Based on these undeniable facts, the new advocates of dictatorship maintained that democracy was a sign of decay of modern civilisation. Therefore, those who stand for a regeneration of the human race, a rehabilitation of mankind, must discard this decadent system and go back to the earlier system where the will of nation was expressed through great men, heroes and supermen, those great men being the embodiment of the will of the people, and therefore the most competent to rule on behalf of the people.

That was the doctrine of fascist dictatorship or National-Socialism. In the period between the two wars from 1920 to 1939, Democracy, attacked from two sides by advocates of dictatorship, lost ground step by step, and, except in a few countries, was replaced by some form or other of dictatorship practically all over Europe.

But even then the advocates of democracy who, in the critical days, wanted to have a democratic front against Fascism on the one side and Communism on the other, did not see the inherent defects of democracy and did not feel the necessity of broadening their concept of democracy, so that it could stand the challenge and survive the crisis of the contemporary world. If we now think of a politics for the future, it implies that we are, on the one hand, rejecting the various forms of dictatorship and, on the other, realise that Democracy as practised so far is not adequate. It cannot stand the crisis. Therefore, democratic principles must be reorientated. Democratic ideas must be enriched by experience, and a more effective form of democratic practice must be conceived.

Because this is a challenging test of human ingenuity, there are people who jump to the facile conclusion that, Democracy, having proved a failure, dictatorship is to be preferred, if society is to be administered in an orderly and efficient manner. But under dictatorship the worst defects of Democracy—namely practical elimination of popular sovereignty and negation of the principle of individual freedom—will be still further aggravated. That is not an improvement on defective Democracy for those who cherish the ideals of individual freedom and sovereignty of the people. Hence, when thinking of a political theory and practice suitable for our time, they must reject dictatorship as a possible alternative.

The practice of delegation of power is a negation of Democracy, because it can never establish government of the people and by the people. It can, under the best of circumstances, only establish government for the people, which, again in the best of cases, may be a benevolent dictatorship, but not Democracy. It goes without saying that in a large country, with millions of inhabitants and where all power is concentrated in a centralised government, rule of the people and by the people is not possible. Therefore,

we must think of a decentralised structure which will make a more direct form of Democracy a practical proposition.

If such a system is possible, it would at the same time eliminate another defect of parliamentary Democracy : Parliamentary Democracy and its philosophy, that is, Liberalism, visualise individuals in a scattered atomised existence. The individual is held to be free, but that is only an abstract conception as long as the free individual is part of a social system in which he is deprived of the effective use of his freedom. Consequently, this concept of the atomised individual left to his own devices leads to a state of complete helplessness on the part of the citizens. On the other hand, it destroys the concept of popular sovereignty, because no single individual can think of exercising his sovereign power, and that realisation has grown as social structures have become more and more complex. This has resulted in the prevailing psychological tendency of seeking security in the mass. Helplessness creates in individuals the tendency of identifying themselves with others equally helpless, of merging themselves in some collectivity, be it called nation or class, in which the helpless individual constituents acquire an almost mystic power merely by losing themselves into a mass. Collectivism offers security against the helplessness to which the individual is condemned under the system of formal parliamentary Democracy.

Modern psychologists and sociologists have dealt with this phenomenon in great detail. This mass mentality of our democratic age has been described as *fear of freedom*, or *flight from freedom*. If we want to restore Democracy to its original meaning, we shall have to see if two conditions can be created : firstly, if a democratic State can be decentralised ; that is, if in the modern world a decentralised State structure is possible, so that direct democracy can become a practical proposition ; and, on the other hand, if man's faith in himself can be restored.

We start from the proposition that institutions, political or economic, are created by men. They are created by man to serve his purpose, which is the purpose of having a full life, a good life, and of developing all aspects of his life and all his potentialities. Every institution is as good as the men who work it. But in the modern world the relation between individuals and institutions has been reverse. Supreme importance is

attached to institutions, and man is subordinated to them. Social progress is not visualised as the resultant of the development of individuals or groups of individuals, but as structural changes imposed from above, from time to time. This reversal of relations between man and man-made institutions evidently is a denial of the fundamental concept of Democracy, because it completely eliminates man and his sovereignty from the picture of things. Therefore, if a better form of political theory and practice is to be evolved, we shall have to see if this abnormal relation can be reversed again, if man can be placed in his proper position of primacy and supremacy.

The beginning must be made by those who want to bring about social changes themselves attaching greater importance to individuals than to institutions. Because, a few good and intelligent people can think of some very good new institutions, but if these institutions will be run by human beings whose ideas are not so new and not so good, they will not produce the expected result. That is the fundamental cause of all the corruption and inefficiency of which everybody is complaining, and which is a feature to be found everywhere in the world. And everywhere the emphasis is on new forms of institutions instead of on a new outlook of the men who are to work the institutions. On the contrary, it is held that, if better institutions could be imposed from above, through the instrumentality of State power or by some miraculous means, men would also become better by this very fact. The contention seems to be that institutions are not made by men, but men are made by institutions!

This is the crux of the problem of the modern world. Attention must be concentrated on this problem. It is evident that a new approach to this problem will have to be based on certain philosophical principles and if it is to be a democratic approach, the principles must be humanist. The general belief is that the common man cannot think for himself and is incapable to judge what is good or bad, for him and in general, and therefore, the common man must be led. For this reason we need either leaders or parties to lead the people and rule the countries. They might go to the extent of guaranteeing to the people the widest suffrage, but that is all they can do because, according to that philosophy, the people are not, and will never be, capable

of ruling themselves.

Is this disparaging idea of man permissible in the light of the knowledge that we possess of the human being? Modern scientific knowledge has established that every human being, barring the diseased or deformed, has the same potentialities to develop as every other human being. Development will be uneven because some human beings start with an advance over others, and even as the latter catch up with them, they too will have further advanced. But subject to individual diversities, each man is endowed with the same basic potentialities of development.

It is scientific knowledge that every human being has the capacity to think, that rational thinking, the quality of intelligence, are in the nature of man. It is an unfortunate fact that owing to long disuse, because traditions and social institutions never appealed to them, a large number of men have been made to forget that they are born as thinking being and endowed with the power of judgment, that they can discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, without having to rely on any external authority for that knowledge. If the modern world is to come out of this perilous crisis, if the sovereign people is to emerge from this state of degradation, there is no other way than to make a growing number of men conscious of their essential human attributes, to awaken their self-respect and self-reliance, their pride to be men.

One of the oldest sages, Plato, attempted to visualise the possibility of an ideal State. He was the first to formulate a democratic theory based on the experience of the practice of direct Democracy in the Greek City States. On the basis of that experience of the politics in the market place of Periclean Athens, he came to the conclusion that Democracy presupposes education. Even when democracies were composed only of a few thousand people, voters could be misled, unless they were educated. This ancient wisdom is even more true in our time. Those who are trying to give Democracy a chance to be practised must realise that without education democracy is not possible.

But experience has proved that education measured in terms of literacy alone does not create guarantees for democratic govern-

ment. What is needed is a different kind of education, an education which will not be imparted with the purpose of maintaining any given *status quo*, but with the sole purpose of making the individuals of a community conscious of their potentialities, help them to think rationally and judge for themselves, and promote their critical faculties by applying it to all problems confronting them. No government promotes that kind of education. The purpose of government education is to create mental conformism. You have to sing patriotic songs, salute national flags and read patriotic history as compiled and edited by governments, so that all people be merged into a homogenous collectivity and forget that they are individuals endowed with certain sovereign faculties and entitled to be free. Hence there is danger in the demand that governments provide all education, especially in backward and largely illiterate countries. Because, Democracy will not be possible until people are taught to remember precisely their critical faculties which governments naturally fear, and apply them for the administration of their community. And this is not taught under government-sponsored systems of national education.

Other ways and means must be found to create that atmosphere of intellectual awakening which is the precondition for democratic practice. Such an intellectual resurgence of the people will take place together with the resurrection of the individual from the grave of the mass. Only when the monster called the masses is decomposed into its component men and women, will an atmosphere be created in which democratic practice becomes possible, in which there can be established governments of the people and by the people. In such an atmosphere, it will become possible to practise direct Democracy in smaller social groups, because to make individuals self-reliant, they must be freed from the feeling of being helpless cogs in the wheels of the gigantic machines of modern States, which allow them no other function than to cast a vote once in several years, and give them no idea of how governments function, so that they cannot even effectively help their government, if they wanted to.

But once the precondition is created, that every citizen and voter will have a minimum degree of intelligent understanding and the ability to think and judge for himself, then this helplessness and hopelessness of the individuals will disappear; they can

create local democracies of their own. The voters need no longer remain scattered like isolated atoms. They can organise themselves on a local scale into People's Committees, and function as local republics, in which direct democracy is possible. Then at the time of elections, these people will no longer have to vote for anybody coming from outside ; they will not only discuss in their committees the merits of candidates presented to them for taking or leaving, but nominate their own candidates from among themselves. To create this condition is the most important political activity.

For this work, we need not wait for an election. We select one constituency. 20 or 25 people there will come to feel the necessity of devising new forms of political practice, because they are dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. They resolve to make an experiment. They begin by creating the precondition for Democracy by spreading education among the people. At a later stage, it should be possible to call a number of local conferences in a constituency and elect delegates from them to a conference of the entire constituency. And at the election time, when all parties come and offer their candidates, the People's Committee may decide to vote for none of those party candidates, but elect one from among themselves as their candidate, and the people will vote for him. The person who will be thus elected and go to the Parliament, will not be responsible to any existing political party machinery. He will be and remain responsible to his local Democracy, of which he himself is a part ; he will be directly responsible to the people who sent him to the Parliament ; he will not have to act on the behests and discipline of any extraneous authority, and he will have to report to and inform his fellow-citizens in his constituency about all his actions and the problems of the wider community, and take his mandate from them alone in all matters and act accordingly to his best ability and conscience.

On this basis a complete constitutional scheme can be visualised. People's Committees endowed with specific constitutional rights will become integral units of the State. Instead of atomised, helpless individuals enjoying an illusory sovereignty, groups of individual citizens will be discussing and planning the affairs of their localities in the framework of similar neighbouring

localities, together constituting the country for whose administration they will feel themselves responsible. A growing network of such organised local democracies will be the instruments through which the electorate can assert its influence from day to day, and ultimately exercise a standing control over the State as a whole. The State will not then be able to become an all-powerful Leviathan, because State power will be decentralised, being largely vested in the local republics. In other words, the State will in this way become coterminous with society.

The State is the political organisation of society. As primitive communities grew larger and more complex, and various aspects of public life had to be coordinated, the State was created for this purpose. The function of the State was the public administration of society. Therefore, a democratic State must be coterminous with society. Today, the State has become an abstraction. In the written Constitutions, the State is divided in three branches, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. If that is all that the State is, then the States must exist only in the capitals and nowhere else. The State, supposed to be the political organisation of society as a whole, has come to be completely divorced from the life of society, if you think of society in terms of the human beings constituting society. The individual has nothing to do with the State, that is, the political administration of his society. It exists only in some central place, far away, beyond the reach and influence of the members of society, and from there makes decisions and imposes its decisions and the people has no say in them.

In the new society of decentralised democracy, the State will be coterminous with society. Every citizen will be informed and consulted for his opinion about the affairs of State, that is, the political administration of his society. Obviously this presupposes educated citizens in ever growing number; but the process itself is the best education. Therefore, it must be started somewhere, and we must not wait until the new system will be introduced from above after somebody's election victory. Working on a local scale, it must prove its worth and spread through example, until the practice, and above all the spirit informing the practice, become more and more universal, and in the end will place its stamp on the whole system. Then, for the first time, we shall

have a democratic State.

The only objection to this plan may be the question of time. How long will it take? Assuming it will take fifty years or even a hundred years—the question is irrelevant. What is the alternative? That is the relevant question. If somebody can suggest another way which will take less time—say twenty or perhaps only two years, and also bring about a democratic society, then the question might arise. But if there is no such alternative, the fact that it may take a long time is no argument against this plan. The alternatives before us so far are decayed and defective Democracy or dictatorship. Whoever believes in either of these, does not have to think of a new form of political practice. But on the assumption that we are not satisfied with the present condition nor with either of these alternatives, other ways have to be explored. Until a better proposal is made, the alternative outlined here should be examined on its own merits and for its internal logic.

The question of time is certainly relevant because the problems are urgent. But if we make a start with determination, there is no reason why it should take so very long, or any longer than any other proposal which holds out any hope of a desirable result. In India particularly, Democracy is just only beginning its career. Therefore, it can be given a chance by building it up from the bottom. In other countries where democratic experiments were made by imposing them from the top, it did not work, and no fundamental changes of a democratic nature can be brought about in this way. But where it was never even tried, we can give Democracy the chance which it did not get elsewhere, by beginning from the right end, that is, from the root, from below.

The first need is to break in our minds with the prejudice that power is the object of all politics, that anybody who wants to participate in politics and achieve anything at all, must have for his first and foremost object to come to power, on the assumption that otherwise nothing can be done, and this is the whole of politics. Party politics in our time is based on that assumption. Power must be captured in some way or other, be it by constitutional or by violent means. All schools of politics, revolutionary and otherwise, have that in common between them: they all must fight to come to power first before they can do

anything in pursuance of their programmes. A party is organised with the object of capturing power. It is done with the ostensibly plausible argument that some people know just how society should be organised, and therefore the voters must vote for them so that they come to power and impose the blessings they have in mind from above on the people, who would otherwise never even think of those blessings, much less achieve them on their own.

That is why we say that party politics implies the denial of democracy ; it implies that people cannot do anything by themselves ; it is a denial of the potential intelligence and creativity of all men, of the sovereignty of the people. Democracy is an empty concept if sovereignty does not mean the ability of the people to do things themselves. If there must always be somebody to do things for them, it means the denial of the sovereignty of the people, the denial of the creativity and the dignity of man.

Against the prejudice that there can be no politics without parties and that parties can do nothing without power, there are two propositions. Firstly, power is not the primary object of politics ; it is a means and there are other means ; and secondly, party politics leads to concentration of power and hence carries in it the germs of the destruction of democracy. Political ends can be achieved without capturing power. Politics can be practised without a party organisation. The object of such a political practice will be to give the sovereign people the opportunity of exercising its sovereignty, to persuade the people not to surrender it by voting for anybody else expecting him to do the things they want to be done, but to vote for themselves, and do things themselves. To do those things being the function of government, by doing them themselves, they will increasingly assume the functions of government, and thereby create a government of the people and by the people.

This new type of political practice may be applied everywhere, even in countries where the traditions of party politics have taken deep roots and found at least partial correctives for the defects of the system. But in a country like India where Democracy is to be newly introduced and where even the appreciation of the democratic way of life is still absent, it seems to

be the only way to create that appreciation and give to the formalities of parliamentarism a democratic content.

If a sufficiently large number of people will from now on begin to work with this perspective, with this new orientation of politics, some tangible results can be achieved within a few years. Such work can start in one constituency, or in a group of constituencies anywhere in the country. For the first time, those who pose as selfless political workers and servants of the people, who, on the strength of a false humility, ask to be placed in power, can be put to the test and the demagogy of vote-catching electioneering exposed. Because such work will mean that these agitators will never come to power as an organised group. People who work in this way will do everything that the best political workers have always done; they will help and teach and educate the people; but they will not ask for their vote. That is something new. And that will create an entirely new and different political atmosphere in the country.

Let us have no illusion. Working for two years, we may not be able to return even a single candidate of People's Committees in the first elections to come. But even then we shall have achieved something. In every constituency where we shall have worked in this spirit, a group of local people will have arisen with some judgment of their own, whose faculty of discrimination and of thinking out their own problems will act as a catalytic agent and radiate their spirit far beyond their constituency. That spirit will pervade large and larger parts of the country, and perhaps in the next election afterwards, a much larger percentage of the electorate will vote with discrimination for candidates of their own choice.

This process will increase in speed and extent, and if the new outlook will attract a sufficiently large number of people, there is no reason why in ten or fifteen years from now, that is, perhaps in the third election in free India, we should not have created a large number of local republics, on the foundation of which a real Democracy can be built. That is how I visualise a politics for our time. It is not a blueprint of the future. It is a politics for our time, to be practised by our generation, here and now.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICS WITHOUT POWER *

The very term power-politics suggests that there might be other kinds of politics, that politics need not necessarily be associated with power. But it has come to be taken for granted so widely that few can conceive of the possibility of politics without power. In consequence, politics throughout the world has degenerated into a scramble for power. All realise the dangerous consequences of that practice, but doubt whether politics without power is possible.

In the modern world, politics has become associated with parties as the instruments of democratic politics. All politics is practised by parties. Political parties are organised with different programmes, and the system of one party replacing another in the government of a country has come to be considered as the essence of parliamentary democracy. But if democracy is government of the people and by the people, then the party system has led to the result of defeating the object of democratic politics. Because any party government is at best government for the people, the party system contradicts the former two and most essential terms in the definition of democracy. It cannot establish a government of the people and by the people. Today one party rules a country for the people, and tomorrow another does so also with the same pretention. There is little essential difference between this kind of democratic government and those of pre-democratic times. Indeed, there has never been any system of government which did not claim to rule for the welfare of the people. Absolute monarchies of the past and dictatorships of the present alike have claimed to be the custodians of popular welfare. If government for the people was democratic government, then benevolent despotism should be considered as the highest form of democracy. For these considerations, party

* Lecture delivered at Ahmedabad, on December 20, 1949.

governments of our time cannot claim to be essentially different from governments of the pre-democratic age. The only difference is that the people did not elect the kings, whereas today parties are placed in power by popular suffrage. In fact, in the olden days, even kingship was an elective office. But while education for democracy is universally neglected, elections are no guarantee for Democracy.

At the close of the Middle-Ages in Europe, the revolt against feudal absolutism was inspired by the doctrine that sovereignty belongs to the people. Democratic governments were born of that revolt. Largely from the ancient Stoic tradition, inherited by early Christianity, it was deduced that man was a moral entity and as such naturally sovereign. The belief in the sovereignty of the individual thus was the foundation of modern democratic theory. By way of corollary, it was believed that the people of a particular State, being composed of sovereign individuals, possessed a collective sovereignty. Therefore, it was maintained, a democratic government could alone be the instrument for a fair and just administration of public affairs, because it obtained authority from the sovereign people. That original conception of a democratic government was certainly progressive and liberating. A truly democratic government was to be a good government. But the government was an entity separate and remote from the people, and the gulf has increasingly widened as the functions of government became more complex and centralised in the hands of experts.

In course of time, democratic practice deviated more and more from the principles of democracy. That was not a deliberate fraud on the part of politicians; it resulted from the inability to solve the problem of practising democracy in large modern States with numerous populations. In the eighteenth century, the advocates of democracy in Europe had in their mind the pattern of direct democracy of the City States of ancient Greece. But it was evident that the entire people of France could not possibly gather in one place and elect their government directly. The solution of the problem was found in the doctrine of representative government, of the delegation of power by the citizens. Thus, from its very birth modern democratic governments in reality came to be governments for the people. Between

the government and the electorate there grew a series of intermediary institutions depriving the people of all possibility to control the governments which claimed to rule on their behalf and derived authority from the sovereignty of the people. Governments for the people in reality became rulers of the people. The sovereign was degraded to the position of the ruled. But sovereignty cannot be transferred, because it is an inalienable right. Therefore, a representative government represents only the party which controls it, and the membership even of the largest party is only a small fraction of the people. In other words representative party government is rule of a minority.

The degeneration of democracy resulted from the inability to devise ways and means for the practice of direct democracy in modern States. To be real, democracy must be direct; government must be under the direct control of the people. Is that possible? That is the problem before the political thinkers of our time. Its solution is to raise political practice above the scramble for power carried on by parties in the name of democracy. In so far as democracy is not government of the people and by the people, it is not democracy. With the rise of the party system, the idea of popular sovereignty became a constitutional fiction. The party system resulted from the difficulty of practising direct democracy in large modern States with numerous populations. And with the rise of the party system, politics became a scramble for power. So, the possibility of politics without power presupposes elimination of parties from the central position in democratic practice, as is bound to happen in an educated mature Democracy.

Those who identify democracy with the party system overlook the fact that political parties are relatively recent institutions. At the time of the French Revolution, there were no parties as they exist today. Neither the Jacobins nor the Girondists filled the role. In England, there were parties even in the seventeenth century; but they were not political parties, but rather religious factions and Court cliques. Political parties as we know them today are a development only of the nineteenth century, when the doctrine of representative government replaced the earlier idea of democracy. Parliamentary, based on the theory of the delegation of power to elected representatives, made of democracy

a mere formality.

It is said that at the time of elections the people can exercise their sovereign right to choose men whom they trust. Given a sufficiently high standard of education on the part of the electorate, that might be the case, provided that parties did not interfere. It is so partially in England even today, because there parliamentarism developed before the rise of the party system. Not until late in the nineteenth century did political parties compete for the suffrage of the people; previously individual candidates who might be associated with this or that party, appealed to their respective constituencies, and the latter voted for individual candidates, not for impersonal party machines. The candidates could not entirely rely upon their party affiliation, but had to win the confidence of the electorate as individuals of proved moral integrity with a clean record of public service.

But under different circumstances, for instance under the system of proportional representation, the people are called upon to vote for this or that party not even knowing the men who would rule on their authority and in their behalf. Even where the system of proportional representation is not introduced, as for instance in Britain, impersonal party machines have eclipsed individual candidates; the choice is between parties. In this situation, practical considerations must prevail. A very good man may belong to a small party; there is little chance of its ever coming to power. Therefore, his chance of being elected is nil.

Under such circumstances, the sovereignty of the individual becomes meaningless; democracy demands that the sovereign individual must merge himself in a party, be a subservient part of an impersonal party machine. In an atmosphere of political backwardness and general ignorance, this system can be abused; people of questionable character can occupy positions of public trust by virtue of belonging to a particular party. A party gives priority and prominence to people not so much for their intellectual merit or moral integrity, but to those who can be of the greatest help for it to capture power. The result is that parties often serve the purpose of promoting the ambition of individuals either thirsting for power for the sake of power or for material gains.

But the people are nowhere in the picture of this scramble for power to which political practice has been debased by the party system. Until now, there has been no case of a party capturing power on behalf of the people, administering it actually under the control of the people. Consequently, under the parliamentary system, we have party dictatorships, and no democratic constitution creates a foolproof guarantee against the rise of such dictatorships. Any majority party can establish a dictatorial regime. The only guarantee is its moral sense. But an impersonal machine can have no sense of morality. Therefore, formal parliamentarism is no guarantee against dictatorship. That curious situation is created by the degeneration of democracy into party politics, into the scramble of parties for power. Contemporary history records cases of dictatorships established democratically in the formalist sense, dictatorships claiming the sanction of parliamentary support. A more than ninety per cent majority of the German people voted for Hitler, and in many other countries dictatorial regimes were established constitutionally.

C Because of all these defects of formal democracy, efforts have been made to make it more real. But no effort, however earnest and sincere, will bear fruit unless it is borne in mind that an educated electorate is the precondition for democracy, education not in the technical sense, but a sufficiently high general cultural level, so that the people can think for themselves, cannot be swayed by demagogic appeals to emotions, and therefore are capable of exercising their intelligent judgment. In a country where this precondition exists at least to some extent, democracy may have a chance; but even there it is destroyed by the party system, which thrives best in the atmosphere of cultural backwardness and popular ignorance.

Parties are organised according to certain political doctrines with the object of introducing specified social measures, revolutionary or otherwise, which would be good for the people. It is further believed that a party must be in office, that is to say, control the government of a country, in order to put its programme into practice. The immediate object of any political party, therefore, is to capture power, which need not necessarily involve acts of violence. Expressions like capture of power or

seizure of power are used by revolutionary parties. But parties advocating constitutional methods or non-violence also want to be in office, which is only a less violent expression of the same purpose. That is how the parliamentary party system becomes a scramble for power. All brands of politics as practised today are party-politics. If party-politics is bad, politics itself is bad. It is easy to see how this system is bound to lead to demoralisation.

A group of people may have very good ideas and be quite honest in their desire to do certain things for the people. But they are convinced that without power they can do nothing. Therefore, if they are serious about doing those things, they must do everything to come to power. All other parties are exactly in the same position. All try to get the greater number of votes; the usual method is to lure voters by promises. Caught in the whirlpool, even the most honest politician loses his sense of proportion and makes promises which he knows cannot be fulfilled. Thus, democracy degenerates into demagoguery.

Under these circumstances, associated with the party system, politicians cannot appeal to the intelligent judgment of the people. The necessary predisposition for the people to be carried away by platform speeches and press campaigns is created by inflaming emotions and inciting passions. False or imaginary issues are raised to cloud the judgment of the people, to create mass hysteria. Whichever party possesses greater skill in election manoeuvres and the means to maintain the largest party machinery and organs of propaganda, has the greatest chance of winning elections and capturing power. In the hysterical atmosphere created by election campaigns, even otherwise intelligent citizens are swayed to vote in a way which they would not do if they were allowed to think rationally. Therefore, to confuse, deceive and mislead the sovereign people, is a necessity of the party system; the practice may vary in degrees, but is essentially the same everywhere. The practice being palpably immoral, and party politics having to rely on it to succeed, it can never be purified. There must be other forms of politics to decide any genuine issues and principles which parties represent.

Once it is assumed that nothing can be done for the good of the society without political power, the evils of the party system necessarily follow. The control of government being the

precondition for doing anything, everything must be done to gain power. The means become the end, and the end is forgotten. It is remembered only to advance the questionable doctrine that it justifies the means. Politics is divorced from morality. If one is not interested in power, he is supposed to be not concerned with politics, indifferent to social problems.

Notwithstanding the fact that in some countries a considerable measure of social reform was carried out under the parliamentary system, the other side of the picture must not be overlooked. Diffusion of power is the essence of democracy, because concentration of power leads to tyranny and dictatorship, which may be hidden behind a facade of empty formalities. The electorate delegates its sovereign power to a party; only a few members of the party go to the Parliament; there they are subject to party discipline, are whipped into the party lobby. Fewer still actually compose the government and wield power. It is not inconceivable that only men of good faith and honest intention may come to the actual seats of power. But that means no more than that, at best, parliamentary democracy can be a benevolent despotism, which constitutionally restricts liberty and regiments economic life to establish a welfare State.

But for other reasons also the best of men are corrupted by the party system. The period of office is limited. As within a few years none can bring heaven on earth, the first concern of politicians in power is to have a second, a third and more terms in power. The most skilful and resourceful party may be perpetually in power. The approximation to that ideal of the party system is attained by winning the next elections; and to do so, greater demagoguery is practised. Even if they have failed to do what they promised at the time of a previous election, party politicians must say that they have succeeded, prove black to be white. When the electorate cannot be deceived by all too obvious facts, the argument is that the time was too short to do much; therefore, some more time must be given. Any party which would honestly admit that they advocated a wrong programme, and appeal to the electorate for another chance to rectify its mistakes, would have no chance to win an election. To compete with demagogues in a system which puts a premium on dishonesty, a politician must come down to this level if he wants

to succeed. Thus, practically nobody engaged in politics as it is practised today, can remain entirely untouched by its corrupt atmosphere. The "sea-green incorruptibles" have always been a fiction; personalities are built up by propaganda. Robespierre was an upright man, stern, ascetic, completely dedicated to a cause, yet, his virtue turned out to be the pretext for abominable vices.

But politics is a social necessity. Society cannot do without a political organisation, that is to say, there must be a State. Government must be carried on. The question, therefore, is whether a different practice of politics is possible. In other words, can politics be raised above the scramble for power? This question cannot be answered within the limits of the usual political discussion. A new politics presupposes a new social philosophy; and the problem of human nature is the basic problem of social philosophy. We shall have to go still further. If we want to free politics from its present evils, we must re-examine our philosophy of life. The old social and political philosophies, conservative, liberal, socialist or communist, are all frankly, or in effect, collectivist. In them, the individual does not count for anything. Some give him the freedom to vote occasionally, but prevent him to do so intelligently. Others declare that the individual becomes free by losing himself in the masses. Those of the first category, in spite of their formal profession of individualism, place institutions above men. But society is not an abstract thing. It is the sum total of the men and women composing it.

So long as individuals cannot judge and discriminate and decide what is right and wrong, there cannot be a good society. Disgust with power politics will produce no result unless it compels us to remember the fundamental principles of democracy, the sovereignty and dignity of the individual, in the light of modern scientific knowledge.

Power can be divorced from political associations and defined as the ability to do things. Thus conceived, it is precisely man's power which can make a better job of human society. But the usefulness of power is eclipsed and leads to abuses when it is concentrated to such an extent that the community as a whole becomes totally powerless. When that happens, the most power-

ful State may have the most powerless citizens. Power being associated with the function of the State, some political theoreticians of recent times have defined the State as an organ of coercion, an instrument created by a certain class or section of society with the purpose of exercising its domination over the rest. The corollary to this definition is that a just and fair social order is impossible so long as the State exists. Therefore, thinking out their thoughts consistently, these political theorists came to the conclusion that in an ideal society the State would wither away. The anarchist denial of the very necessity of the State is only an exaggerated version of what may be called the communist utopia.

The ideal of a stateless society is obviously an absurd utopia. The apostles of the withering away of the State have proved that in practice. The most outstanding feature of the communist social organisation is greater and greater concentration of power, political as well as economic. It is difficult to see how one of the two processes can ever annul the other. The establishment of a communist society presupposes a highly centralised political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat. How can a parallel concentration of economic power eventually lead to the withering away of the organ of political power? Such unrealistic ideas about the future naturally result from the equally unrealistic, empirically unverifiable, doctrines that society is divided into irreconcilable classes, and the history of civilisation is the history of class struggle.

The division of society into classes with diverse interests is a historical fact. But it is equally true that cohesive forces are also inherent in society. The centrifugal tendency is counteracted by a centripetal tendency. In the history of social evolution, an equilibrium between the two created stability, whereas discord and disharmony led either to the establishment of dictatorships or other autocratic forms of government, or to social disintegration.

If there was no cohesive force in society, then mankind would never have come out of a state governed by the laws of the jungle. The entire history of society shows that a cohesive force has always been more or less, in operation; otherwise there would be no history of civilisation. Ancient civilisations broke

down because the forces of social cohesion and harmony were overwhelmed by strong centrifugal tendencies. Mediaeval and modern history has also been punctuated from time to time by wars and revolutions. But reaching higher and higher levels of social evolution, civilisation survived those recurring vicissitudes and tensions and regained its equilibrium.

One can visualise an idealised State in the future when the contradictory forces will have disappeared, and society be an homogenous organism. Then, there would be no classes, one trying to dominate all others. Yet, society will be there ; it will not be a primitive community, but a complicated organisation with greatly diversified fields of activities. Such a society cannot possibly do without some central organisation. It need not be a Leviathan, as the State has been described, but only a co-ordinating factor, one of the various social institutions, the function of which will be to harmonise the functions of the various other institutions. This future shape of the State emerges from the most authoritative and ancient definition of the State as the political organisation of society.

Primitive communities organised themselves politically much later than their original formation, primarily with the purpose of self-defence and struggle for existence. In the intervening period, progressive economic development added to the original functions of society, which was departmentalised according to vocations and professions. Eventually, the State rose to co-ordinate and harmonise the diverse departments of social activities so that the individuals could live in peace and order to promote the welfare of all living in the community. It was not superimposed on society, nor given any totalistic significance. It was created as the instrument of public administration, to maintain order, to make laws and supervise their being observed so that the diverse forms of social activities could be carried on harmoniously. The State rose as one of the several other social institutions, all equally autonomous in their spheres—economic, educational, cultural, political.

Until a few centuries ago, the government did not interfere for instance in the economic life of society, beyond raising taxes. The requirements of the community were met by peasants, artisans and traders, applying human labour to natural resources

either individually or organised in guilds and distributing them according to supply and demand. Individual freedom and institutional autonomy in the educational and cultural fields were particularly beyond the jurisdiction of the State. The government of Pericles did not dictate what philosophy Plato or Aristotle should teach. In those days, there was no national education. The educational institutions not only of the ancient, but even of the mediaeval times were autonomous. The tradition is still alive partially in the classical seats of learning in Europe. Similarly in India, there were seats of learning, like Taxila and Nalanda, which were independent of the State.

The economic advantages of the politically centralised modern society are a doubtful blessing; one hand takes away from the individual as much or more than the other gives. We can visualise a time when the State will again cease to be the Leviathan which it has become today, without dreaming of the absurd utopia of a stateless society, which would mean, a society without public administration and co-ordination. Ways and means must be sought to reduce the functions of the State to the minimum, to confine it to its native function of the instrument for public administration, to co-ordinate the various functions of other autonomous social institutions.

There are social philosophers who advocate what is called a pluralistic society, composed of autonomous institutions, the State being one of them, with no other function than to regulate and co-ordinate their diverse activities. This view of social organisation was anticipated in the nineteenth century liberal dictum that the government is the best which governs the least. Since then the tendency for concentration of power has constantly gained ground; as a result, it is not an exaggeration to say that the State has become an engine of coercion. But it is so because of concentration of power.

Thus, ultimately the problem of democratic political practice is that of decentralisation. Politically it might not be so baffling a problem. But it is aggravated by the centralisation of economic power immensely reinforcing the power of the State. In the last analysis, the problem is whether the economy of a modern society can be decentralised, and in consequence thereof also the political power. This is the crucial problem of our time. The

fatalistic view that since it has been so for centuries, how can it be otherwise, would imply that human ingenuity has been exhausted and the last word of wisdom pronounced. That would be a dismal perspective tending towards a social breakdown. Given this negation of human potentiality to evolve, progress and create endlessly, "might is right" will not only be the legal, but also the moral law, and it would be a law of the jungle.

But there is no reason to assume that the party system with its tendency to concentration of power is indispensable and eternal, simply because it has been the outstanding feature of politics for a hundred years or so. There is even less reason for the belief that no better system could be invented. There were times when there was no party system, yet large States were governed, and not much worse than today. But the decisive argument against it is the results to which it had led. Has the result of the party system been such as to warrant the belief that its perpetuation is indispensable for the continuation and welfare of human society? Does it not provide enough reason to try and build up a new system, which may eliminate the evils of the party system? Human ingenuity has not been exhausted. Political practice in the past has been a matter of trial and error; and we can rectify errors, having learned from experience. If party politics has made a mess of things, it is a man-made mess, and men have not only the power to do evil, they bear also the power to undo evil. Only when we are convinced that what we have done so far is not good enough, can we do better; only then we can recover the sense of urgency and responsibility to do something better. That is how human history has been a history of progress. If man did not have the power of reasoning and judgment, there would have been no progress and no modern civilisation.

If human freedom is not to be sacrificed in the scramble for power, we shall have to explore the possibility of political practice without the interpolation of political parties between the people and their sovereign power. Because it is through the instrumentality of political parties that power is concentrated in the hands of minorities, to be abused on false pretences. Decentralisation of power is conditional upon disappearance of the instrument of centralisation. It must be replaced by another

instrument which can guarantee that the sovereignty of the people will remain with the people. The delegation of power to elected representatives is the legal sanction of parliamentary democratic governments. Constitutional Pandits declare that this is democracy itself; but in reality, it is a negation of democracy, based on contempt for the *demos*.

Not only the politicians, but even the people themselves have come to doubt that they can wield power and exercise their sovereignty. They have forgotten that all men are born with the same potentialities, the highest being that of their reasoning faculty. The way out, which party politicians would not take, because that would mean the end of their days, is an appeal to reason. That appeal has the sanction of modern science behind it. Human nature is rational. It is true that the rational nature of man has been buried fathoms deep. But being the essence of human nature, it can be recovered. Unreason has gone so far that the appeal to reason is bound to find response, and a rational political practice will bear fruit sooner than one might imagine. But the measure of success will not be power; it will be gradual disappearance of the evils which are at the root of the present situation. It will express itself in an intelligent public opinion which cannot be swayed by emotional and demagogic appeals.

Once that happens, the end of the party system has begun, and with the parties, the main cause of concentration of power will disappear. In that process, the foundation of a decentralised State will have been laid in local republics, which will combine all functions of the State as they affect the local life. National culture, national economy and national political institutions will be cast on the pattern of the functions of these local republics; power will remain with them, to be wielded directly by the individual members of the small communities. Being thus reared upon a broad foundation of direct democracies, the State will be really democratic. Usurpation of power will be impossible. A pluralistic modern society can be built up doing away with centralisation of power in politics and economics.

So long as the purpose of politics is to capture power, you cannot do without parties. But if you do not want to capture power, you can practise politics without parties. In the absence

of a party, the practice of delegation of power disappears and also the constitutional sanction for concentration of power. We can have a harmonious society which will be a free society without destroying the freedom of the individual, where the freedom, welfare and prosperity of society will be the sum total of the freedom, welfare and prosperity actually enjoyed by the individual men and women constituting that society.

CHAPTER VII

A PARTY DISCLAIMS POWER*

There are in the contemporary world, broadly speaking two different types of political systems incorporated in two kinds of Constitutions, the parliamentary democratic Constitutions and the Constitution of the Soviet Union. Finding that both place, in varying degrees and from different causes, unnecessary restrictions on the unfoldment of individual human potentialities, we have visualised the picture of a freer society and outlined its constitutional structure. The Constitution that we have drafted indicates the political organisation of a society, the purpose of which is to establish social justice and individual freedom. Our Draft Constitution¹ is not a purely theoretical proposition, but the product of critical examination of given realities and the deductions made therefrom. It has been drafted for the Indian context, but its principles are applicable everywhere.

The experience of both the parliamentary democratic and the Soviet constitutional systems leads one to the conclusion that neither the one nor the other promises to take the world out of the present crisis. Parliamentary democracy was believed to be the last word of political wisdom, until the Marxists condemned it, lock, stock and barrel. They postulated a dictatorship of the proletariat for the period of transition towards an ideal democracy under which the State would wither away and a classless society be established.

All but the most unimaginative conventionalists recognise the inadequacies of parliamentarism. There are attempts to modify it so that it should somehow be improved, although hardly any clear idea has emerged of the required reform. On the other hand, the alternative political system based on the Soviet

* Speech concluding the discussion on Constitution-making at the Political Study camp, Dehradun, May 17-25, 1947.

¹ *Constitution of India*. A draft by M. N. Roy, available at Renaissance Publishers Ltd., 15, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta 12.

Constitution is either condemned by its opponents as an unmixed evil, or extolled by its protagonists as the ideal State, neither of which attitudes is very helpful. Having pointed out the inadequacies of both the systems, the Radical Democratic Draft Constitution proposes a political organisation of society which will include the best elements in both, benefiting of the experience of parliamentary democracy as well as of the Soviet system. Only on one point it is categorical: in rejecting dictatorship of any kind. If parliamentary democracy is to be improved on the ground that it is veiled dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, an open dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be logically advocated as the better alternative.

The Draft Constitution incorporates the positive liberal aspects of parliamentary democracy and also the fundamentally democratic features of the Soviet system. It is not a paper Constitution, not the blueprint of an ideal structure, nor deduced merely from ideas of rationality and morality, but from the experience of both the systems which are contending for the mastery of the world at present. At the same time, except for the unmitigated ultra-empiricists, experience cannot be the sole guide; it must be tested by logic and rationality. That is to say "pure thought" cannot altogether be ruled out while making the Constitution of any country. But even pure thought is not sucked out of the air. In the last analysis, it is also the result of experience. Direct experience is not the only experience.

That being the case, there is no ground for the fear that a draft of this kind must be a utopian "ideal" Constitution; that when the situation in the country will change, there would be no relation between that Constitution and the reality of the situation. The present reality of the situation will remain until a new reality is created. The present reality is of inequality, absence of freedom, economic disparity. Any new reality might bring merely quantitative changes; there might be greater political freedom in external relations, but greater economic unfreedom internally in which condition, freedom or equality or liberalism or tolerance will not be possible. So long as the reality will be one of inequality and unstable equilibrium, the picture of a political organisation which offers certain very concrete, rational, moral and at the same time practical methods of removing the

disagreeable reality in order to replace it by a pleasanter reality, will remain relevant and applicable.

The necessity of public administration led to the formation of the State. The State being the political organisation of society, it can be reasonably expected eventually to be identical with society. This theory of State puts a content in the Marxist ideal of the State withering away. When the State will no longer be an institution over and above society, it will cease to be an instrument of coercion, and *as such* it will wither away. Being coincident with society, there will also be no trusteeship. But even then society will have to be administered, and the State will continue in its original function as the political organisation of society.

This logical theory of State determines the approach to the problem of power. When the State becomes identical with the entire society, or as society politically organised, it will not make room for parties engaged in the struggle for capturing power. Parties fight elections for the purpose of coming to power. Struggle for power results from the existence of parties. A party not in power or out of office may promise anything. But how can the people be sure that in power it will not also be corrupted? This question, which throws doubt on the possibility of democracy or good government, will become irrelevant under a State which, being identical with the entire society, makes no room for parties contending for power. This possible solution of the baffling problem of power is not merely a logical deduction from a given theory of State. It is concretely outlined in this Draft Constitution. But that again is predicated on a philosophical concept.

In the free State visualised by us as a practical possibility, detached individuals, modern version of philosopher-kings—will be at the helm of public affairs. Detached individuals, that is, spiritually free men, cannot be corrupted by power. A man susceptible to corruption is not spiritually free, not detached, not a philosopher. Therefore, the doubt is not with regard to the possibility of spiritually free men to be above corruption; it is about the possibility of men ever becoming spiritually free. A Humanist philosophy does not admit of that doubt. It starts from the scientifically grounded belief that man is essentially

rational and therefore moral. As soon as he becomes conscious of the rational essence and the moral core of his very physical existence, man stands firmly on the way to spiritual freedom. That realistically optimistic view of human nature transforms the ideal of a just and equitable social order from a mere utopia into a practical proposition.

We maintain that, given his essential rationality, it is possible for the individual man to attain spiritual freedom, to be detached, and thus to be above corruption. Such men would not hanker after power. A party composed of such men would not think in terms of capturing power. The problem is whether such men will choose to join parties whose traditional reason of existence is the fight to come to power.

As long as we talk in terms of capturing power, we do not improve on the theory of proletarian dictatorship, which also was meant to be an instrument for the establishment of greater democracy. New ideas should not be expressed in old terminologies. We must speak a new language also, and have the moral courage not to make any concession to lingering prejudices.

Searching for a way out of the present crisis, we have come up against the rock-bottom of political wisdom that education is the essence and condition of democracy. In modern times, democrats have tended to forget this. The result was not only the failure of democracy, but doubt about its very possibility. We have reverted to the old idea of the relation between education and democracy. We speak of an intelligent, educated and organised democracy. We also speak about detached individuals, spiritually free men. And we are not simply playing with words. We honestly try to be spiritually free men, detached individuals and philosophers; therefore we did not allow our prejudices to go underground and from that position of vantage to influence our ideas and behaviour. We want to uproot our prejudices and prove to ourselves that we are immune from corruption. Doubt and scepticism are useful correctives, but some conviction is also necessary. Only those who cannot conceive of their being above corruption, under any circumstances, will doubt the possibility of a State as visualised in the draft.

There arises a practical question: how can detached individuals influence events in the transition period when democracy

is not yet educated? That is also indicated in the *Draft Constitution*; institutional forms have been outlined. The establishment of a democratic Constitution, such as will make democracy possible, presupposes a fairly large volume of opinion in favour of real democracy. Given that basic condition, the transitional arrangements should be above all practicable. To what extent that condition will be operative, is difficult to say. Perhaps only a little, in the beginning. But there will be those who will, as we are wanting to do, primarily devote themselves to the task of educating democracy; and in proportion to the accomplishment of that task, the chance of detached individuals gradually coming to the places allotted to them will grow.

That sounds like Fabian gradualism. But the alternative is communist adventurism. If freedom is what we want, then the communist alternative, however romantic offers no chance. There is nothing else for us to do but fall back on gradualism, if you will call it so. If the Universe does not permit us a speed faster than the velocity of light, we cannot go any faster. Since a quicker tempo is precluded by the circumstances in which we must operate, it is idle to quarrel with reality. Gradualism is the quickest tempo of social change, like the velocity of light in the physical Universe. One is as real as the other and constitutes the limiting factor.

But the tempo of social change is not subject to a physical mechanism; it depends on man's endeavour; and man's creative power is potentially unlimited. Therefore, what appears to be an endless journey may become much shorter, if greater human endeavour is applied to the process of social change. Abstract ideas about the relation between the State and Society and the position of the individual in relation to both are stated in the *22 Thesis of Radical Democracy*.* But even previous to their formulation, they had been given an institutional form in the *Draft Constitution*. These two documents, one a concise enunciation of fundamental principles, and the other a picture of their practical application, should be read together; and together they solve the problem of power.

These being our ideas, and given the association of political

* See Annexes.

parties with scramble for power, it has to be specifically stated that the Radical Democratic Party is not trying to capture power, our principle being that democracy is vitiating by delegation of power. As soon as, on one pretext or another, power is taken away from the people by delegation, even for the shortest period of time, democracy is killed. Power must always remain vested in the people ; that is the only guarantee for democracy. It must be given an institutional form. In a society which makes slaves of most individuals, even if power remains formally vested in the people, democracy becomes a sham.

Hence the supreme importance of the idea of organised democracy. The idea gets its concrete form in People's Committees. As members of these basic units of the State, individual citizens will no longer be atomised and helpless, which state reduces the sovereignty of the people to a fiction. The People's Committees will be standing bodies with wide powers and direct influence on similar Committees for larger areas, and through them the citizens will actually be in possession of power always. The result will be a far-reaching decentralisation of the State. The State will become no more than a clearing house of information, an advisory and administrative machinery to co-ordinate and supervise policies framed directly by the people as a whole operating through local People's Committees. That is how the State will become identical with society, its function confined to an over-all co-ordination and harmonisation of social life in a country as a whole.

That being our ideal, the question of our party capturing power does not arise, and it is irrelevant to apprehend that in power it would also be corrupted like any other political party. Apart from the basic guarantee that a consciously rational and spontaneously moral human being cannot be corrupted by power, a party like ours, with this ideal, will not strive for power, and therefore not come to power as a party. It wants that power must be vested in the people organised in People's Committees, through which the people will be educated and taught to exercise their sovereignty, thereby rendering scramble for power by parties impossible. Let there be ten other parties ; we do not want any party to be suppressed. But if we succeed, no party can capture power, which must remain with the people in their Committees.

For some time to come, one or the other parties may still manage to usurp power ; we shall not compete in the practice, which is a denial of democracy. We shall apply ourselves to the fundamental task of educating the people until the people will no longer allow anybody to capture their power on any plausible pretext. To achieve this, we start to practise the old Platonic principle that education is the foundation of democracy. Believing, on the authority of modern scientific knowledge, that man is essentially rational, we shall endeavour to make all citizens conscious of their rationality. That is the purpose of education. Once democracy will be educated in that sense, scramble for power will no longer be the purpose of politics. Political parties desiring to capture power will no longer be able to sway the people. Politics will become the art of public administration ; when every human being can master that art, the State will become identical with society.

It is not a utopia to say that not capture of power but diffusion of power is the object of the Radical Democratic Party. At least it is the object of every Radical Democrat. Why is it not possible to disown the ambition to capture power and yet to work for freedom ? In order to conceive the possibility, one needs only to realise that power, if it is not actually vested in the entire people, but concentrated in the hands of a few, is negation of freedom. We must discard the Hegelian conception of freedom, inherited by the Communists as well as the Fascists. If freedom was the realisation of necessity, then it could be merely another name for slavery. That is how freedom is conceived by all the worshippers at the shrine of that political god—the collective ego. For the sake of freedom for all, everyone must forego freedom. Negation of freedom of the individual, by some mystical process of addition, becomes freedom of the community. That sort of mystic freedom is a fraud, and therefore, it must be buttressed on power—to deceive and delude, and extract voluntary submission.

Seeing that society cannot be free so long as the individuals composing it remain spiritually enslaved, the rejection of politics for power follows logically. If that is the conviction of the Radical Democratic Party, that does not mean that it must give up politics. But its politics will be not a politics of power but a politics

of freedom.

But if we lack the conviction, if we keep on doubting ourselves, we cannot convince others. I say that politics without the ambition of power is possible. Otherwise, politics can never be rational and moral, will always remain a pursuit without scruple, without principle, without honesty, everyone trying to cut the others' throat. Having been active in politics all my life, I shall not play the dirty game. But I believe that an alternative practice is possible. That is the only hope.

All are agreed that a crisis has overtaken modern civilisation. That is a fact. But what is the essential feature of a crisis? It is the end of stagnation. Crisis means that things have come to a head and must tip one way or the other. Either humanity will relapse into barbarism or find a way towards a brighter future. If the latter alternative has any chance, Humanism must prevail. Humanism needs no political power to triumph. Let nationalists and communists scramble for power, driving the world towards a catastrophe. Humanism alone holds out the hope of salvation, not in heaven, but in this world. A radically democratic order is the politics of integral Humanism, which must be the philosophy of the modern man, in this age of science and enlightenment, if he is to survive the present crisis and open a new chapter of history.

CHAPTER VIII

DEMOCRACY AND PARTY-POLITICS*

The theoretical contention that political parties destroy the principle of popular sovereignty is being corroborated in West Europe where people are burdened with heavy military expenditure out of all proportions supposedly for the defence of democracy. That means, Democracy is being killed for the defence of Democracy. All parties are playing this game, however large their number, however, small the party. The party system has all along been unstable in the continental countries, where proportional representation encouraged the rise of small parties which could wield disproportionate influence in the parliaments, leading the party system itself *ad absurdum* as an indispensable factor of Democracy which they themselves render increasingly unstable.

On the pretext of giving a chance to minorities, proportional representation incorporates the worst of the party system. All personal relation between the voters and their representative disappears; the electorate votes not for individual candidates, but for parties and members of parliament cannot be responsible to particular groups of voters. Given such impersonal relation between the electorate and the parties in parliament, the responsibility or representativeness of a government becomes a mere formality, if not a deliberate fraud. That is how the party system corrupts democracy.

It worked better in Great Britain, where the party system could not altogether destroy the individualist basis of democracy. But although even now members of parliament are elected individually by territorially grouped voters, and therefore could be at least theoretically held responsible to their constituents, in Britain also the party system has lost its stability; both parties are divided, their programmes are being watered down, their differences are

* Article published in *Radical Humanist*, 22nd April, 1951.

being obliterated. Consequently, Westminster is no longer the political cricket field; government party and the opposition in the present parliament frequently accuse each other of not playing the game according to the rules.

The Labour Party majority was reduced to such a very narrow margin after the second post-war elections, that it could not remain in office for any length of time if it strictly observed parliamentary conventions. Experienced commentators forecast a new election within two months. According to the traditional parliamentary convention, that should have been the case. Because, no government in such an insecure parliamentary position could have a long-term plan of legislation. To rely on such a narrow parliamentary majority, would mean abolition of democracy inside the party. Party members would not be entitled to have independent judgment and act accordingly, even in extreme cases; and every single member must obey the party whip under all circumstances. Otherwise there would be no guarantee against the eventuality of a few members of the government party walking over in the opposition lobby or abstaining from voting on any particular issue. In the given unstable parliamentary position, elected representatives of the people must obey the party even if their constituents expressly desired them to act otherwise. It is evident how the party usurps the sovereignty of the people, even in Britain with its long and deep-rooted democratic tradition.

What is of greater importance is that with half a dozen or a few more votes in the parliament, a government cannot claim to represent even a bare majority of the electorate, either legally or morally. Moreover, there remains the question whether a slightly larger majority in the parliament would make a government more representative, whether a majority of 55 or 60 p.c. is entitled to ride roughshod over the corresponding minority. That is one of the fundamental fallacies of formal democracy.

However, in bygone days, when party leaders could play political cricket like gentlemen, a parliamentary position such as was created by the 1950 election would not be allowed to continue. Both the parties would agree to go to the country as soon as possible for a clearer verdict of the electorate.

But the time-honoured procedure was not adopted, and the

Labour Party continued in office with the tacit approval of the opposition. The truce resulted from the reluctance of both the parties to risk a new election, because neither was sure of the result. So, between the two, the sovereign people was robbed of the traditional right to elect a new parliament which might give the country a stable and independent government—independent of the emergency of opportunist parliamentary manoeuvres.

By making an impression that the projected iron and steel nationalisation might not be pressed before obtaining a clearer verdict of the electorate, the government seemed to secure the opposition promise to support its foreign policy. The Conservatives as well as the Liberals could give the promise with a clear conscience, because the Labour Government's foreign policy hardly promoted the case of international Socialism.

But towards the end of the year, the government could no longer temporise with the projected iron and steel nationalisation Bill. The parliamentary truce could not last indefinitely. The powerful left wing of the Labour Party pressed for it with the argument that a general election soon thereafter, fought with an out and out socialist programme, would give the party a larger majority. The crucial legislation was passed with the severest cracking of the party whip, and the precarious truce ended. Since then, the "Mother of Parliaments" has been presenting a scene which exposes the party system in its true colour—an unscrupulous scramble for power.

Given the palpable uncertainty of the majority-minority relation in the country, the opposition challenge for a trial of strength is not without force. The government should take it up, if it wanted to prove that it had the support of a clear majority in the country, if not in the parliament. But it preferred to remain in office—on the strength of the party whip. Preference of the non-democratic procedure could be legitimately interpreted as the admission of the fear of losing the election, if it was held in the near future. The corollary to the tacit admission was that the party in power had lost, for the time being at any rate, the necessary constitutional mandate. Nevertheless, it did not allow the electorate to choose a more representative government.

If it was sure of its position in the country, the Labour Party would not prefer a procedure which was democratically

doubtful and morally not above reproach. In order to remain in office until it would be in a position to conduct an election campaign more successfully, the party most rigidly suppressed democracy in its ranks.

No government can be called truly representative unless it commands a voluntary support of a parliamentary majority. It is a well known fact that, if members of the Parliamentary Labour Party were allowed to vote according to their better judgment, the Government would have been defeated on several important issues not chosen by the opposition. A government controlled by a party, which remains in office at the cost of democracy in its own ranks, cannot be a really democratic government.

The opposition tactics of wearing out the government majority by forcing all-night sessions of the parliament is questionable. Having in the past given tacit support to the government on major issues of foreign policy, now the opposition wants to turn it out by a snap vote on some minor issue. It rests with the government to end this parody of parliamentarism by taking up the challenge of the opposition in the country. But it is still uncertain about the mood of the electorate, whereas the opposition feels sure of winning the election if it was held before the government could do something to allay popular discontent, and choose a convenient issue on which a majority of the electorate could be swayed by an appeal to emotion. When in the scramble for power the strength of the contending parties is more or less evenly balanced, the electorate is not given the chance to see what the real issues are and pronounce its judgment intelligently and dispassionately. That is how the party system debauches and destroys democracy.

The purpose of parties is to capture power and retain it. The formalities of parliamentarism afford them opportunities to do so without the intelligent support of a requisite majority of the electorate, if it cannot be done democratically. The necessity of rigging elections is inherent in the party system under formal parliamentarism. When a party or a coalition of parties, not sure of the support of the electorate, cannot avoid an election, they can amend the electoral law while still in power, so as to prejudice the chances of the opposition. Democracy has been so debased in France, at the very moment when she is stampeded

to rearm for the defence of democracy.

According to the constitutional stipulation about the duration of the present parliament, France must have a general election this year. In the present parliament, the communist members constitute the largest group. Therefore, they had to be included in the coalition government which was formed after the election of the present parliament. But eventually they left the government with the hope of creating a political chaos which would enable them to capture monopoly power. Having failed in that adventure, they have been marking time. The system of proportional representation would make it possible for them to capture a still larger number of seats in the next parliament at the cost of the Socialists. Meanwhile, the de Gaullist party appeared on the scene, threatening to snatch many parliamentary seats from the Popular Republican Party, the second largest group in the present parliament. The present coalition of centre parties had no chance of remaining in power in a new parliament, unless the electoral law was so changed as to deprive the Communists and de Gaullists of the advantage of proportional representation, introduced by the Constitution of the Fourth Republic. It is estimated that, if the electoral law was not amended, Communists and de Gaullists together might capture sixty per cent of the seats in the new parliament. That would be the end of parliamentary democracy in France.

But even when confronted with this threat to the very existence of parliamentary democracy, the parties supporting the coalition government could not agree about the necessary amendment of the electoral law. The squabble about the division of the loaves and fishes of office prevented the coalition government from tackling major issues firmly, and the political situation went from bad to worse. Finally, there was an agreement, and the electoral law has been so amended as to guarantee to the parties now in office a majority in the next parliament. They have taken advantage of their present position to rig the next election. The anti-democratic practice is justified with the plausible argument that the dictatorial parties must be kept out of office by all means. But the real purpose is to enable the opposing parties to retain power. What difference does it make if they also cannot do so without destroying democracy? The new electoral

law is devised so as to enable the parties in office to remain there, whatever may be the will of the electorate. If under the old law, election results did not correctly reflect the will of the people, the position will be no better under the new law. Both are instruments of party-politics —of the scramble for power. Neither guarantees a free election, the voice of the sovereign people being falsified by party manipulations.

The insecurity and uncertainties of Europe have not yet reached the United States of America. But there also, the party system does not reflect the intelligent will of the people. The Republican Party lost the last election; nevertheless, it very largely dictates the policies of the present Democratic administration. The latter thus is acting contrary to its popular mandate; it is doing so in order to escape defeat in the next election. It is obviously an unprincipled practice. In America, the two-party system is a make-believe which serves no other purpose than nepotism. There, democracy has degenerated into the monopolist rule of a bi-partisan ruling clique.

In India, the party system is in its infancy. For the present, there is one-party rule, which makes no secret of the desire to perpetuate itself. Even if the facade of parliamentarism is maintained, one-party rule is a negation of democracy. Whatever may be written in the Constitution, and despite the democratic professions of men in power, the ruling party is frankly totalitarian. It claims to represent the nation, and the nation is one and indivisible. Nor does the Constitution, formulated by a parliament (Constituent Assembly was a misnomer) packed with members of the ruling party, offer any guarantee against its absolutism. The fundamental law of the Sovereign Democratic Republic of India proclaimed with all solemnity, granted certain "Fundamental Rights" of citizenship. One should think that the foundation of a structure could not be changed without pulling it down. But a party in power knows no logic. Some of the "Fundamental Rights" are going to be amended for further restricting liberty. Because, as it is, they allow the possibility of some challenge to the absoluteness of one-party rule. Amendments are also contemplated to curtail the independence of the judiciary.

The Constitution was framed by an assembly not competent

to do so ; it was not elected for the purpose. The country will have a parliament elected by universal suffrage. The proposed amendments to the Constitution might have waited until then. There is no danger of the totalitarian State to collapse in such a short time. Why this unwarranted hurry ? Simply because, whatever may be the opinion in the country, having full control of the super-annuated parliament, the party in power can have any measures passed. It is the extreme case of a party usurping the sovereignty of the people.

At the same time, democracy inside the ruling party will also be destroyed. There never has been much of it. But the latest Ukase of the Congress High Command beats all records. It emphasises that members of the parliament are responsible to the party to the incredible extent that they are not entitled to speak freely even in the parliament. Any criticism of the party will be allowed only in closed party meetings. The accused claims to be judge ! As the parliament is composed at present, the people outside can make any attempt to influence legislation or control the executive only through the instrumentality of members belonging to the ruling party. Of late, some of these have tended to voice the growing dissatisfaction of the people. As elected representatives of the people, to do so is their undeniable right and bounded duty. They have now been forbidden to perform their democratic function for the sake of "the tradition and dignity of the Congress". The unrestrained voice of the people might disturb the fake harmony of totalitarian national unity. Therefore, it must be suppressed. And that outrage on democracy is committed for maintaining party discipline. The contradiction between democracy and the party system cannot be more crassly demonstrated.

Everywhere, political parties are formed not with the object of practising democracy, but of capturing power. They are guided by the dictum that the end justifies the means, and the means often amount to the corruption and destruction of democracy, as contemporary and past experience in so many countries shows.

CHAPTER IX

POLITICS WITHOUT PARTY*

Having come to the conclusion, empirically as well as theoretically, that the system of several parties engaged in the struggle for power, to be captured either constitutionally or through armed insurrection, had debased democracy to demagoguery, Radical Democrats and Humanists could no longer function as a political party. They were guided by the time-honoured dictum that charity begins at home, or that example is better than precept, and consequently dissolved their party in so far as it had been organised with the object of participating in the fight for power.

But they never accepted either the anarchist view that politics is an evil, nor the Marxist utopia of a stateless society. They had defined politics as the theory and practice of public administration, and the State as the political organisation of society. The corollary to the definition is that membership of civil society implies the responsibility of doing whatever is necessary to guarantee an orderly, equitable and just administration of public affairs; only the recluse can disown the responsibility. By resolving to dissolve their party, the Radical Democrats did not propose to retire into reclusories. The resolution simply was no longer to participate in a pattern of political practice which has done more harm than good, has soiled the fair name of democracy. It was to initiate other forms of public activities which would raise politics on a higher level.

One of the many bad features of the party system is that it restricts the number of citizens participating in political activity. The membership even of the largest mass party cannot embrace more than a small fraction of the people. The restriction logically results from the very term party. Indian terms, such as Congress, Sangh, Sabha or Dal, do not alter the situation, because of the identity of purpose, namely, to capture political power. No matter whatever may be the name, a political party is formed

* Article published in *Radical Humanist*, 25th September, 1949.

with the sole object of capturing control of the State, sooner or later. The object is justified with the argument that only in office a party can put its programme into practice. Therefore, by adopting one of the Indian terms for its name, a political organisation does not cease to be a party, that is to say, only a part of the people or the class or the community it claims to represent. Otherwise, there would be no sense in the idea of representation. Since by its very nature a party is bound to be exclusive, a minority organisation, party-politics cannot be democratic politics in the true sense of the term. Political practice is monopolised by a minority of professional politicians; and the bulk of the community are given no place in the practice; they are to follow one party or the other. Democracy therefore can never be practised through the intermediary of party-politics which, by its very nature, reduces the *demos* to the status of camp-followers.

Obviously, the rejection of party-politics means a resolution to practise politics on a much wider-field, so that the entire people may actively participate in it. Under the party system, the people can do no more than vote for this or that candidate who is nominated by respective parties. Political practice cannot be truly democratised unless the people can nominate as well as vote for a candidate. It is easy to see that parties will have no place in the latter form of political practice, which provides for sustained actual participation of the entire community. While not compelling them to do so, it allows all citizens to play an active and significant role in the State.

It goes without saying that this change-over cannot take place from today to tomorrow; nor will an entire country discard the old practice and adopt the new one all at once. It will be a process, and the process itself will be uneven. The change-over from party-politics to democratic politics will be brought about gradually by raising the intellectual level of the people, by quickening their sense of self-respect and self-reliance. Therefore, democracy is not possible without education.

Those who will apply themselves to the initial task of laying down the foundation of a democratic social order, cannot in the meantime be indifferent to the political conditions in which they will have to operate for quite a long time. These conditions may

influence their work, for better or worse. In the transition period, parliamentary democracy, with all its manifest failures and inadequacies, will be obviously preferable to a dictatorship. Civil liberties will have a greater chance of survival so long as several parties alternate in power or contend for power, than under one-party rule.

The control of the State by one party claiming to be the sole custodian of popular interest is antagonistic to democracy. Paternalism, even with the very best of motives, kills self-reliance in the people and fosters in them an authoritarian mentality, a predisposition to accept authority as the natural order of things. In backward countries, an undemocratic one-party rule is fortified by the traditional credulity and lack of self-confidence on the part of the people, political backwardness and general ignorance. It will be reinforced by the illiteracy of an overwhelming majority of the enlarged electorate under the new Constitutions. Therefore, no realistic democrat can entertain the illusion that in India, for instance, the Congress could be dislodged from power in the near future. The object should be to encourage the maximum possible resistance to its totalitarian ambitions, so that at least a semblance of parliamentary democracy and a modicum of civil liberties may be preserved while sustained efforts will be made to build up a democratic order from below.

For these realistic considerations, Radical Democrats should have no objection to supporting parties which would challenge the system of one-party rule and the totalitarian claim of the Congress. This attitude will be consistent with the rejection of party-politics and scramble for power, because of the difference between voting and soliciting votes. Radicals should support, and ask others also to support, the most promising opposition party, not with the illusion that the situation would materially change if it replaced the Congress in power, but only to shake the foundation of one-party rule, and provided that the opposition candidates are better even of proved integrity. The sincerity of the resolution to stand outside party-politics will be demonstrated by refusing to be members of an party or to become their candidates for election.

Co-operation with opposition parties at the time of election, however, does not exhaust the possibilities of the political practice

of Radical Democracy. The most fundamental task is to educate the people. Election campaigns can be utilised for this task. Democracy will not be successful so long as the masses can be swayed by demagoguery or appeal to emotions. On the eve of an election, when various parties will make big promises to catch votes, the electorate should be advised and helped to examine the promises and vote intelligently. That will mean political education.

On the same occasion, the people should be told that they are not obliged to vote for this or that party; that they can just as well vote for a locally nominated candidate who will be their man, known to them, and therefore can be controlled more easily. The initial propaganda for the nomination of local candidates, instead of partymen, will lead to the formation of People's Committees. The people will replace the party, and a long step towards real democracy will be taken. That will be political activity of fundamental importance, and active participation in the current politics of the country without engaging in the scramble for power. There are many other forms of non-party political activity designed to spread a spirit of independence and self-help in all day-to-day public affairs of a community.

Those who conceived the idea of organised democracy must now put it into practice. People's Committees are to be the basic units of an organised democracy; and it is easily imagined how the rise of People's Committees will mean the beginning of the end of party-politics. The experience of individuals working accordingly to this plan in selected places should be a source of general inspiration. Even existing Village Panchayats set up in some parts of the country can be built up as units of organised democracy, defying party control, even of the party in power. To transform the growing dissatisfaction into an informed and constructively directed opposition to one-party rule can become an integral part in a larger scheme of political activity which will transcend the narrow limits of interested party-politics. In the prevailing authoritarian atmosphere, one-party rule is generally taken for granted. This is a dangerous tendency which must be combatted. Otherwise, a dictatorship with "democratic" sanction may destroy all hopes of political freedom and social liberation. The cultural tradition of backward countries being the breeding

influence their work, for better or worse. In the transition period, parliamentary democracy, with all its manifest failures and inadequacies, will be obviously preferable to a dictatorship. Civil liberties will have a greater chance of survival so long as several parties alternate in power or contend for power, than under one-party rule.

The control of the State by one party claiming to be the sole custodian of popular interest is antagonistic to democracy. Paternalism, even with the very best of motives, kills self-reliance in the people and fosters in them an authoritarian mentality, a predisposition to accept authority as the natural order of things. In backward countries, an undemocratic one-party rule is fortified by the traditional credulity and lack of self-confidence on the part of the people, political backwardness and general ignorance. It will be reinforced by the illiteracy of an overwhelming majority of the enlarged electorate under the new Constitutions. Therefore, no realistic democrat can entertain the illusion that in India, for instance, the Congress could be dislodged from power in the near future. The object should be to encourage the maximum possible resistance to its totalitarian ambitions, so that at least a semblance of parliamentary democracy and a modicum of civil liberties may be preserved while sustained efforts will be made to build up a democratic order from below.

For these realistic considerations, Radical Democrats should have no objection to supporting parties which would challenge the system of one-party rule and the totalitarian claim of the Congress. This attitude will be consistent with the rejection of party-politics and scramble for power, because of the difference between voting and soliciting votes. Radicals should support, and ask others also to support, the most promising opposition party, not with the illusion that the situation would materially change if it replaced the Congress in power, but only to shake the foundation of one-party rule, and provided that the opposition candidates are better even of proved integrity. The sincerity of the resolution to stand outside party-politics will be demonstrated by refusing to be members of an party or to become their candidates for election.

Co-operation with opposition parties at the time of election, however, does not exhaust the possibilities of the political practice

of Radical Democracy. The most fundamental task is to educate the people. Election campaigns can be utilised for this task. Democracy will not be successful so long as the masses can be swayed by demagogy or appeal to emotions. On the eve of an election, when various parties will make big promises to catch votes, the electorate should be advised and helped to examine the promises and vote intelligently. That will mean political education.

On the same occasion, the people should be told that they are not obliged to vote for this or that party ; that they can just as well vote for a locally nominated candidate who will be their man, known to them, and therefore can be controlled more easily. The initial propaganda for the nomination of local candidates, instead of partymen, will lead to the formation of People's Committees. The people will replace the party, and a long step towards real democracy will be taken. That will be political activity of fundamental importance, and active participation in the current politics of the country without engaging in the scramble for power. There are many other forms of non-party political activity designed to spread a spirit of independence and self-help in all day-to-day public affairs of a community.

Those who conceived the idea of organised democracy must now put it into practice. People's Committees are to be the basic units of an organised democracy ; and it is easily imagined how the rise of People's Committees will mean the beginning of the end of party-politics. The experience of individuals working accordingly to this plan in selected places should be a source of general inspiration. Even existing Village Panchayats set up in some parts of the country can be built up as units of organised democracy, defying party control, even of the party in power. To transform the growing dissatisfaction into an informed and constructively directed opposition to one-party rule can become an integral part in a larger scheme of political activity which will transcend the narrow limits of interested party-politics. In the prevailing authoritarian atmosphere, one-party rule is generally taken for granted. This is a dangerous tendency which must be combatted. Otherwise, a dictatorship with "democratic" sanction may destroy all hopes of political freedom and social liberation. The cultural tradition of backward countries being the breeding

ground of the danger, it must be, in the first place, fought on the cultural front. Enlightenment, civic education and spread of knowledge are the weapons. Experience also has a great educative value. Elections are part of that and they will show that in an atmosphere of political illiteracy of the bulk of the electorate and authoritarian mentality of the middle class, even formal parliamentary democracy is not possible. Many even in the ranks of the parties, today, deluded with the hope of coming to power at some time or other, may be expected to learn from the experience the lesson that democracy must be built up from below and, abandoning party-politics, will turn to democratic politics. Meanwhile, the pioneers must show that politics without party is possible.

The last Conference of the Radical Democratic Party marked the opening of a new chapter in contemporary political history with the decision to transform a political party into a broad and comprehensive social movement for the spread of education for democracy and the promotion of the ideal of freedom.* The decision is probably unprecedented in the history of political institutions. Instances of political organisations having atrophied, decayed or decomposed may not be wanting, nor cases of organisations having dissolved their separate entity with a view to merging into another. But several hundred delegates possessed of political conviction and enthusiasm deciding after prolonged deliberations to transform a political organisation of their own creation, is perhaps unique. It amounts at once to an assertion of man's sovereignty and creativity.

The decision of the Conference at Calcutta was a logical deduction from the philosophy of New Humanism formulated by the Radical Democrats two years earlier. As a result, the Radical Democratic Party had already been engaged in developing a comprehensive social movement. Having abjured the aim of power, it had placed itself outside the scramble for it, the only sense in which politics seems to be understood in our times. The activities carried on by the Party could not lend themselves to be measured by the standards generally applied to a traditional poli-

* The Radical Democratic Party was formed in December 1940 and dissolved in December 1948.

tical party. A certain anomalous position had thus arisen between those activities and the designation of a party, which on occasions created confusion even in the minds of those who otherwise sympathised with and supported the cause of Radical Democracy. The Calcutta decision ends that anomaly and thus removes what constituted, in a way, a limitation on those activities.

The Radical Democratic Party had the tradition of freedom and rationality in its own ranks. That enabled the Party to take such a decision. Throughout the period of its existence, it functioned as a school for the education of its members to develop into better human beings, and never as a collectivity with a transcendental significance, demanding the sacrifice of their individuality from its constituents. It had no existence of its own, over and above and independent of its constituents which could enchain its creators and reduce them to a position of subordination. It was an expression of the co-operative activity of Radical Democrats, inspired by a common ideal. As such, it was free from the organisational characteristics of political parties, many of which are necessary corollaries of their being engaged in coming to power. The discipline in its ranks was an expression of organisational ethics and never meant to be a code of conduct enforced with a whip. Responsibilities were voluntarily accepted and authority had mostly suggestive and directive significance.

Built up in this manner, the Party never claimed a strong mechanical apparatus with huge mass membership which could be no more than a blind following in the prevailing atmosphere of cultural backwardness. But it did surpass any other group in the country in respect of its intellectual integrity and spiritual strength. These were often proved beyond doubt during the short period of its existence, when the Party had to struggle against overwhelming odds, and were recognised even by those who disagreed with it. In the successive waves of nationalist mass hysteria, Radical Democrats alone stood firm, reminding the people that so long as politics was based on emotion and prejudice, it could not bring them freedom. They went against the popular current because intellectual and moral integrity always counted for more than immediate and temporary success.

Though the Radical Democratic Party was a comparatively small political party, its traditions and functioning gave it a

cohesion rarely seen in political groups. The decision of the Radical Democrats to cease functioning as a political party is an expression of that spirit struggling to expand beyond the limits of a closed group.

Inspired by a democratic ideal and aiming at the construction of a political apparatus in which power would be effectively vested in the people as a whole, it could not and did not endeavour to function as an intermediary between the people and the state. The task it had formulated for itself was diffusion of power, and meant to remove the gulf between the rulers and the ruled, which has so often proved to be destructive of democracy, even within the framework of formal representative institutions. The party could not therefore achieve its task through the capture of power, not even by the aid of the ballot box, much less through insurrectionary means. It was thus neither a constitutional nor a revolutionary party in the traditional sense. Sharing a common ideal, the Radical Democrats were united in an organisation which worked for the diffusion of knowledge as the essential precondition for the diffusion of power and the building up of the institutions of a free and democratic society. Given this nature of their task and the activity which followed from it, it was difficult to see why they should remain a political party. The decision to cease doing so simply signifies a recognition of that difficulty and an endeavour to remove it.

This difficulty was not one of their creation, but one which Radical Democrats had to face in the process of the development of their activities. Having abjured the aim of power and thus placed themselves by their own choice outside the game of power politics, there is no reason why they should have exposed their co-operative effort to be judged by rules and standards relevant to that game. Having been an entirely different kind of political party, there is no reason why they should have tied themselves to a name identified with a form of organisation which they rejected as undemocratic. Engaged in activities calculated to promote the freedom and well-being of all, they were stultified by an organisational form which by its very nature is sectarian, and erects barriers against non-members. After all, the term "party" has a meaning; it signifies a part of the people, sharing a particular ideal, and engaged in activities with the purpose of achieving

at, which invariably imply its dominating the whole as an indispensable stage.

Education of the citizens and gradual building up of a new political structure from below are the only guarantees against these dangers of the party system. Education will make people consistently self-reliant, rational, discriminating and hence capable of protecting themselves from being easy victims to mass hypnosis of one kind or the other, and only from among such people can a new institutional framework crystallise which will provide the guarantee against an individual or group of individuals dominating and exploiting them. The institutional framework of parliamentary democracy with its inherent concentration of power in the hands of few though the political parties can hardly be expected to fulfil this need. It is not in the nature of political parties to function in this role. Leaving aside the obviously monolithic parties frankly aiming at the establishment of a dictatorial rule, even a constitutional party seeking to obtain the support of a majority through the ballot box in order to control the political state apparatus cannot make it its primary task to educate the people. Being involved in the game of power, it has to play it according to the rules, and objective political education of the people might be a means to defeat the end of coming to power. That a party comes to power backed by a majority is no proof and guarantee that it is democratic. And education of the people may also militate against its next objective of remaining in power.

To have discarded the organisational form of a party does not in any way, even remotely imply that Radical Democrats will eschew politics. Those who cannot conceive of politics without the incentive of power, and therefore without a party, are not the best doctors for the maladies of our time. They themselves need to be cured. Political parties have been instruments devised mainly for the smooth functioning of the political apparatus of parliamentary democracy, which seldom went further than paying lip service to the sovereignty of the human being. In the contemporary context it does not guarantee even the continuation of that formality. The problem of democracy can therefore no longer be solved by political parties. It is a deeper and more comprehensive problem than one of institutional adjustments. It can be solved only by a comprehensive social movement, deve-

✓loped on the basis of the realisation of the ultimate identity of political, economic and moral problems, and inspired by a philosophy capable of suggesting solutions of them all. "New Humanism", of which Radical Democracy is the political expression, is such a philosophy. Guided by this philosophy, Radical Democrats will now endeavour to develop a Radical Humanist Movement, and in consequence discard a form of organisation which had become irrelevant to their task.

CHAPTER X

FROM PARTY TO MOVEMENT*

Karl Marx, in one of his more reckless moods, declared that man was the root of mankind, which is indeed less obvious than it sounds. Most probably, he hit on the strange formulation in an attempt to improve on Protagoras, who had said that man was the measure of all things. The ancient Sophist doctrine had gone into the making of the nineteenth century Utilitarianism of the Philosophical Radicals. Marx denounced them as ideologists of the bourgeoisie. But he could not be a powerful prophet of social justice, and yet disown the humanist tradition. In order to distinguish his spiritual heritage, or perhaps to prove his immaculate conception, he tried to reject, by implication, the fallacious principle of ancient Humanism. He preferred Feuerbach's more modern Humanism, the just critique of which quasi-mystic doctrine was the point of departure of his journey towards Communism.

Over a century has passed since Marx began as a confused, utopian Humanist. During this fateful century, modern civilisation broke away from its humanist tradition and pursued a variety of collectivist ideals, all of which have proved illusive. Of late, there has been a revival of the tendency to remember the root—man. There is a movement for a humanist revival. India lives in the backwaters of modern civilisation. The echo of any new movement of thought reaches our country after a long time-lag. Therefore, the impact of the movement for a humanist revival is not yet felt in our country very keenly; but a faint echo has reached us, and has found a response in the ideas of New Humanism and the Radical Humanist movement.

In the post-war period, the demand for a humanist revival has become a distinctive feature of the intellectual life of Europe. The movement, however, suffers from same self-contradictions. At least some of its currents propose to resurrect Humanism on

* Concluding speech at the Fourth Conference of the Radical Democratic Party, Calcutta, December 29, 1948.

the basis of a religious revival. The French philosopher Jacques Maritain is the leader of this movement. He maintains that the movement for a humanist revival must seek inspiration in Christianity. This attitude contradicts the historical fact that the humanist tradition of the modern civilisation was born of the Renaissance, which was the revolt of man against God and against the church.

There are other advocates of a humanist revival who would not go to the extent of Maritain's neo-scholasticism. They propose to resurrect the spirit of the humanist natural religion of the eighteenth century—a religion without God, Christianity without Revelation. All great religions originally were in some sense humanist movements. But they all developed in the contrary direction, simply because their common point of departure was belief in the superhuman. Religion can be very sophisticated; it may do away with the anthropomorphic conception of God and reduce deity to a disembodied cosmic consciousness. Yet, religion is not religion unless it assumes some superhuman existence. The basic principle of Humanism is the primacy of man. Manhood is the beginning of human existence, and man is an end in himself. Evidently, Humanism cannot be based on the belief that there is something higher than man.

That was the defect of Humanism in the past. Therefore, in course of time, it was discredited as a merely romantic doctrine. The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance was also ultimately defective. It represented man's conscious or unconscious revolt against God, yet could not explain man. The belief in God was replaced by a belief in man. Man became the object of belief, not an object of knowledge. God was dethroned, to be replaced by Man, conceived as a mystic entity, essentially not different from the metaphysical concept of Soul deduced from the belief in God.

The naturalist Humanism of the Renaissance was certainly an advance on the religious Humanism of the earlier period. But because of its mystic implication, because human being and becoming could not as yet be placed in the context of the physical world, it also could not satisfy the human mind. Subjected to the searching scepticism of seventeenth century rationalism, it was again relegated to the lumber-room of history. Ultimately,

the tradition of the naturalist yet mystic Humanism found a fresh expression in Feuerbach, the disciple of Hegel, who became the spiritual father of Karl Marx.

Feuerbach's critique of Christianity is equally valid for all religions. It is thoroughly devastating. It shows how God is a creation of human imagination, yet, even then, leaves man unexplained as simply given, an elementary undefinable, a mystic entity, fountain-head of a new faith.

But human efforts of centuries at last reached a point where only one thing remained to be done to complete the spiritual liberation of man: to explain, What is man? And modern science was promising a solution of the final problem. The venerable doctrine of special creation, expounded differently in different religions, received the first mortal blow early in the nineteenth century, when geological discoveries showed that life had existed on the earth from time immemorial. That startling revelation gave birth to the modern science of biology, which within less than half a century led to the revolutionary discovery of Darwin about the origin of species and descent of man. The evolution of life having been traced into the depths of physical nature, and the animal ancestry of the human species established, man ceased to be a mystic and mysterious phenomenon specially created by God as a vehicle for the operation of the Providential Will.

At that moment, Karl Marx stepped in with his partially valid criticism of Feuerbach; but instead of improving upon him, he buried Humanism for a long time to come. Karl Marx seized on that defect of Feuerbach's philosophy and tried to set it right. He said that man was a social being, having his being and becoming in society. An effort to improve on Feuerbach ultimately led to the burial of the individual man, who was submerged in the collective being of society.

Yet, Marx began as a Humanist, pursuing the age-old idea towards a point where development of the individual would mean development for all. The humanist tradition of modern civilisation was too strong for a prophetic reformer to ignore. But a correct rejection of the mystic conception of man led him to a negation of his own ideal. Man is a social animal; he cannot have his being and becoming in isolation; ergo, argued

the Hegelian, social reorganisation is the condition for the liberation of man. The perverted utopia of Communism became a new religion; an imaginary collective ego—social interest or social progress—replaced the old God, to be propitiated by the sacrifice of the individual. Man must surrender his freedom as an individual to regain it in a collective existence.

That was a throwback. Modern political theories, developed in the seventeenth century, all started from the individual. The problem was regarding the origin of society; how was civil society founded? The creation of modern political institutions was to be guided by the knowledge of the origin of civil society. In the last analysis, the problem was about the nature of man. The origin of society was explained variously by the different thinkers who applied themselves to the problem. They all assumed, implicitly, the rationality of man. The doctrine of Social Contract ultimately became the Bible of democracy. Philosophically, it was interpreted differently. Rousseau's interpretation differed from that of Locke. Liberalism based on Locke's doctrine retained the humanist principle of the sovereignty of the individual. But Rousseau became the prophet of totalitarianism, which was heralded by his doctrine of the General Will, deduced from the hypothesis of an original contract.

Thus, a metaphysical concept of popular sovereignty replaced the mediaeval doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. If kings ruled by divine right, Rousseau's democracy also rested on a metaphysical sanction, which ultimately led to a situation in which the creation had greater importance than the creator, to the extent that it was entitled to claim the creator for its first victim.

Modern democracy was indeed an improvement on mediaevalism. But its individual units eventually became a constitutional fiction, which eclipsed the man of flesh and blood endowed with intelligence, will and emotion. In modern Liberalism, the individual became the "economic man". That degeneration of the humanist tradition of modern democracy culminated in the Philosophical Radicalism of the nineteenth century, which still held individual freedom as an article of faith. But in the context of capitalist society, "the economic man" could only exist either as a slave or a slave-holder. That debasement of the individual

discredited the liberal democratic doctrine of individual freedom, and gave rise to Marxist collectivism, which simply recognised the fact of the total eclipse of man by institutions and argued, with a measure of seeming plausibility, that reconstruction of society frankly as a totalitarian institution would restore human freedom.

Ultimately, democracy was threatened with destruction in a fierce clash of totalitarian dictatorships, and civilised mankind was overtaken by the crisis of our time, perhaps the greatest crisis in history, being not only political or economic, but moral and spiritual—a total crisis affecting the whole of human existence. The movement for a humanist revival is the reaction to this crisis; it represents a conscious human endeavour, as distinct from the mechanical action of political or economic automatic forces.

But to be revived, so as to rescue civilised society from the imminent danger of a complete breakdown or relapse into a modern barbarism, Humanism must be freed from the defect of its earlier history and the fallacies of the subsequent periods. It must discard the mystic and metaphysical notion about the essence of man, and place man, in his totality, in the context of the physical Universe. It must start from a clear understanding of the being and becoming of man, of the nature of man, such as will rule out all possibility of mystification and subordination of man to anything beyond his biological being, which includes intelligence, will, emotion, instincts and intuition.

Therefore we call it New Humanism; it is the old doctrine of human sovereignty and dignity informed by modern science. We did not have to discover anything new. The natural sciences have dispelled all mystery about the old question: What is Man? Tracing the origin of man in physical nature, they have disrupted the venerable prejudice that there is something in man which is not physical; which is spiritual, in the sense of something beyond the reach of human understanding, and not of this world. Inherited from the days of blessed ignorance, it never allowed man to have full faith in himself. And a complete loss of that faith is the cause as well as the most characteristic feature of the crisis of our time. Therefore it is a moral, spiritual, crisis which cannot be overcome by any institutional makeshift.

Man must regain faith in himself if the civilised world is to

get out of the crisis of our time. But he cannot be self-reliant unless he outgrows the time-honoured prejudice that, if he is ever to shine, he can do so only in the reflection of a Divine Light. New Humanism maintains that modern science, particularly the science of life and man, that is, biology, has destroyed the foundation of this prejudice. The foundation was ignorance. The light of scientific knowledge has revealed the truth about human nature. Man is essentially a rational being. His basic urge is not to believe, but to question and to know. He gropes in the darkness of ignorance, a helpless victim of blind faith in forces beyond his control, until the light of knowledge illumines his path. The only truth accessible to man is the content of his knowledge. Anything beyond the reach of his knowledge is nothing—an illusion.

Religion itself was a creation of the primitive rationality of man in the state of ignorance. Super-natural forces were assumed as hypotheses without which he could not understand the world. When knowledge makes his innate rationality more manifest, he can discard the old hypotheses based on ignorance, because he no longer needs them. Man is not a static being; he grows continually and endlessly. Humanism, therefore, must keep pace with the growth of man—his knowledge about himself and of nature. Humanism informed by modern scientific knowledge is a new Integral Humanism. Going to the root of man's existence, it is a Radical Humanism. It proclaims the primacy of man because it can explain man without any super-human or super-natural hypothesis. It pursues the ideal of a rational and moral society, because it knows that man is rational by nature and therefore can be moral, not under compulsion, but spontaneously and voluntarily. Since a consciously rational man cannot but behave morally, man also is naturally moral. Morality is neither transcendental nor intuitive; it is a human attribute, which can be cultivated with growing enlightenment. These are the fundamental principles of the New Humanism which traces man's beginning in physical nature and declares himself to be his own end.

So long as Humanism was associated with a mystic concept of man—man engaged in self-contemplation, living in an ivory tower, having nothing to do with the world of other men—it

naturally could not be concerned with social problems, with politics and economics. New Humanism is not a system of contemplative thought. It is a philosophy of life, and life combines thought, feeling and action. It proposes to give democracy a chance by laying a solid foundation of an intelligent public opinion formed by rational human beings. Politics, as it has been practised hitherto, has reduced the principle of popular sovereignty to a fiction. Humanist politics alone can make a reality of it.

A country is not free unless it is inhabited by free men, by men who believe that they can make themselves free; who are good, moral and virtuous because it gives them pleasure to be so; who need no super-human authority to compel them to be so. We do not want any heavenly policemen to keep us on the right road. Unless man can stand morally on his own legs, freedom remains an illusion; and no society can ever be free unless it is composed of free men. If history cannot strike out a new path guided by such principles, there is no hope for mankind.

A little knowledge of human history and modern science gives the conviction that there is hope; that mankind is capable of striking out a new way. Only, it cannot be shown by leaders who are as blind as their followers. The leaders of the contemporary world, democrats and dictators alike, are the victims of their own prejudices. Politicians have forgotten that they are men like others. Those who believe themselves to be supermen have really sunk to the subhuman level. Because what is non-human is less than human. Democratic politicians and dictators equally believe that they can be powerful only if identified with powerful States; none of them can claim the adherence, affection, love and admiration of their fellow-citizens because he is what he is, but only as an ordained leader, a superman, the head of an all-powerful State. Such people, of course, can never strike out the new way which must be travelled if mankind is to come out of the crisis, and which must be a humanist way.

The vicious circle of party-politics has become such a tradition that anybody who would say anything against it, maintaining that politics can be practised in a different way, may be laughed out as a crank. Therefore, what we are saying today may be dismissed as unrealistic and impractical. But somebody

must bell the cat.

However, it is not after all such an impractical proposition. Leaving aside the philosophy, we can approach the problems of life pragmatically, empirically. What is happening in India, for instance? There is a party in power. It is in power because the people have voted it to be there. By all accepted standards, it is a democratic party, and we have a popular government. The next election will be on universal suffrage. The Congress will come back to power with an even greater majority. Because there will be so many more voters to put slips of paper in the ballot box with the reverential spirit of worshipping at a shrine. In the given atmosphere of blind faith, religious mentality and hero-worship, the Congress cannot be kept out of power. As a party supported by the people, why should it be dislodged from power? Hence we may have a one-party State indefinitely, under a democratic system. Has not parliamentary democracy lost all meaning? There is talk of an opposition party. Does this kind of authoritarian democracy make room for an opposition party? In the given atmosphere of the country, the opposition party would have to produce two Mahatmas if it wants to beat the Congress, which has won the blind faith of the people thanks to its having had a Mahatma. By that standard, the Congress Mahatma having worn only a small loincloth, the opposition Mahatmas, to beat the opponent in the game of making political capital of the religiosity and prejudices of an ignorant people, should have to go naked.

Is that democracy? It will certainly not be anything like government of the people, by the people; it will be a rule by groups of politicians who can match each other in the game of fooling the demos. And what is still worse is that, given the supreme importance attached to power in political practice, there is no other way for an opposition party to replace the Congress, not unless the mentality of the people is changed.

The general belief is that a political party must come to power in order to implement its programme. Therefore, power becomes the sole concern for political practice. That being so, every means is adopted to capture power, the end justifying the means. That is why there is no morality in politics. The position cannot be changed by pious preachings. Politics must have

a different purpose if it is ever to be moral. To win the franchise of the electorate, any party must make greater promises than its rival. That rule of the game opens it to the temptation of committing the dishonesty of making reckless promises—promising more than any government can do under the given conditions of a country. And a party is all the more open to the temptation of the dishonest practice when the vast bulk of the electorate is utterly incapable of understanding political and economic problems. In such an atmosphere, democracy necessarily degenerates into demagoguery.

And what more can any leftist party promise? The Congress has declared that it stands for socialism and a classless society. Why should the electorate be impressed by the promise of that utopia when made by new aspirants for power, when their trusted leaders, who have laid low mighty British Imperialism, will also take them there, or promise to do so?

What is the lesson? Either there is no hope for an opposition party, or an opposition party will have to do something even worse than the party in power, find ways and means for deceiving the people to an even greater extent. There remains the revolutionary alternative of denouncing parliamentary democracy as a swindle and calling the people to armed insurrection. But that too will not do. There is a powerful State which not only commands the confidence of the people, but has a modern army to defend itself. If the communists even succeeded in leading thousands on the road to insurrection, nothing would happen but a mass slaughter; and the government will still remain a popular government for the majority of the people.

So, neither constitutionally nor through violent revolution is there any hope of changing the situation in the near future. I would go to the extent of saying that, if the cultural atmosphere of our country remains like this, there is no hope of changing the situation ever. The only hope of changing it arises from the hope of changing that atmosphere, the outlook and mentality of the people. If there will be more and more people able to think for themselves, who will not be swayed by demagogic propaganda and blind faith, then the social foundation of the parties exploiting the backwardness of the people will be shaken, and India will be moving towards freedom.

CHAPTER XI

HUMANIST POLITICS *

Humanist politics may appear to be something novel, because while politics has been qualified by a variety of adjectives, these have never included the term "humanist." The world has heard of anarchist, democratic, conservative, revolutionary and liberal politics; there has been nationalist, imperialist and socialist or communist politics, and it might be asked what is the need of introducing yet another brand of politics in this medley of political notions which has already created more than enough confusion. The need arises from the fact that none of them seems capable to solve the present crisis and to enable men to be freer and happier. The necessity of humanist politics was born of the conviction that the crisis of the modern world can be solved only by emphasising the human element in public affairs, or rather by giving the human individual a more prominent place in political theory and practice. All sorts of forces, elements and factors are considered as ends and means in politics, but it is often forgotten that there is no purpose in all this unless it increases the welfare and happiness of men, and that it is men alone who can bring it about, not impersonal forces and factors.

This point of view, of course, has to be backed up by an entire system of thought, and its relevancy and possibility shown in practical life. Every political doctrine has a philosophy of its own. Those who are disturbed by the experience of the contemporary world must react to the crisis not fatalistically but creatively by re-examining their whole political notions and traditions, which have been accepted for too long without questioning. In doing so, they came to the conclusion that certain fundamental principles had to be restated, if they were to serve as the basis of a new philosophy of life, which would restore the individual to his place of supremacy. Such a philosophy is a humanist philosophy and we have called it New Humanism. Humanism as such is an old philosophy. As a matter of fact, the

* Lecture delivered at the C. J. Hall, Bombay, on January 31st, 1949.

modern political doctrine of democracy was inspired by the philosophy of Humanism which appeared in Europe at the close of the Middle Ages, when the great intellectual movement known as the European Renaissance raised the banner of the revolt of man.

But the humanist philosophy of the Renaissance could not stand the test of practical experience. It was eclipsed because it was limited by a deficiency which could not be avoided at that period. Humanism denied the existence of superhuman or supernatural forces and placed man in the centre of the Universe. Man was the point of departure in all its arguments. But it failed to explain man himself.

Today we are in a position to take up the threads of Humanism by eliminating its defects. Man is no longer an elementary undefinable. Today we possess a good deal of knowledge about man. We may not as yet be able to explain exactly how animate matter came to emerge out of the background of the physical Universe; but there is no reason to assume that man is something which could not be explained as coming directly out of the background of the physical Universe. With this greater knowledge about man, the defects of the older Humanism can be removed; the humanist doctrine that man is the centre of things, that man is the creator of everything in his world, can today be revived and substantiated, and thereby a new inspiration given for that type of political practice which appears to offer the only way out of the modern crisis, namely a really effective, humanist, radical democracy.

Humanism as a social philosophy is concerned with human behaviour, with human relations. But a social philosophy, in order to be convincing, must be integrated into a complete system of thought, including a cosmology and other branches of knowledge. This has its relevance to humanist politics, and before making humanist politics plausible, the philosophical background of Humanism had to be outlined to show how it leads upto this new form of humanist politics.

The humanist principle of attributing primacy and sovereignty to the individual is also the accepted principle of democratic political theory. But the practice of formal parliamentary democracy deviated from this fundamental principle, and consequently came

to grief. That deviation was ultimately the result of the fact that the traditional Humanism failed to explain man himself and those human attributes which enable him to use his sovereignty effectively.

The traditional Humanism could not explain how and why man can be depended upon for behaving rationally and morally, that is, a responsible citizen of a given society. Consequently, it came to be believed, even by the best of Democrats, that though sovereignty indeed belongs to the people, the people, composed as they are of men and women not sufficiently educated, enlightened and qualified for administering public affairs, must delegate their power to elected representatives, and hence democratic government came to be known as representative government.

It is not difficult to see the difference between a democratic government and a representative government. Democracy has been defined as government of the people, by the people, for the people. Of that generally accepted definition, however, two-thirds has been silently eliminated and in reality, democracy has come to be nothing more than at best government for the people. A government of the people and by the people has never yet existed anywhere in the world. The people do not govern; they simply delegate their sovereign right to their representatives, and the representatives govern; that is to say, the representatives meet in Parliament, the Parliament forms a government, and both parliaments and governments tend to become increasingly remote and independent of the theoretically sovereign people.

Parliamentary democracy is representative government, and it is government for the people. If this were the whole of democracy, democratic government is no more democratic than a monarchist government or even a more or less benevolent dictatorship. Because kings and dictators also claim to rule for the people. If we have to take the professions of democratic politicians that they are ruling for the people on their face value, is there any reason to disbelieve kings and dictators when they say the same? It may be said that the people after all elected their representatives; but we also know how they elect them. They do not elect them discriminatingly, intelligently convinced that this particular set of people really represents their, the

people's interests. They naturally elect those who make the best promises, and those who have the biggest and most efficient party machinery at their command can naturally get their promises across to the largest number of people.

The original sin of the discredited democratic practice was to forget the wisdom of Plato who said that education was the condition for democracy. Without education, democracy is not possible. The modern democrats took the backwardness of the electorate for granted. And since experience taught that it was easier for political parties to sway a backward electorate and obtain their votes by demagogic promises, democratic politicians, even later when in power, neglected the task of educating the people, in such a manner that the democratic way of life might then be consciously appreciated and pursued by every member of a democratic society.

In course of time, the malpractice of formal democracy was reinforced by all sorts of pseudo-scientific doctrines, which denied that public affairs can be guided by reason, least of all on the part of the mass of the people. They take as example the behaviour of masses, and show that only emotional appeals find response in the average man and women, and from this conclude that it is not possible for every man and woman to claim access to the intellectual and rational heights which only the best members of a society in any given period can attain. Consequently, side by side with the division of society in economic classes, the society was horizontally divided between the elite and the masses.

The new elite was no longer constituted by divine right, but by the right of qualitative superiority. They alone were considered to be competent to acquire the ability to rule. There must be a ruling set and the masses, and ruling becomes increasingly a prerogative of experts. Under these circumstances, democracy is not possible, because an individual has no possibility to assert his sovereignty, unless he belongs to the elite. If we want Democracy, then this system must be changed and replaced by the system of an increasingly direct democracy, that is, a system in which every individual citizen would have the opportunity of understanding and influencing the affairs of society and participate in them. Such a proposition cannot be made unless it can also be maintained that every single human being is potentially capable

of developing his creative powers, his intelligence, his discrimination, as much as any other human being. Scientific Humanism can make that assertion.

Education as a precondition of democracy is not just primary education ; it is not even the conventional higher or scientific education. It is the process of raising the intellectual and cultural level of a people. So long as it cannot be maintained on the strength of scientific knowledge that every man, by virtue of being a human being, is capable of rising to the highest heights of human attainments, a humanist philosophy cannot be propounded, a humanist social doctrine cannot be advanced, a humanist political practice will not be possible. This is the starting point for a humanist political practice which alone can make of Democracy a reality.

Education for Democracy is hardly found anywhere. A certain degeneration of education in this sense is inevitable under the formal parliamentary democratic system. That is in the nature of the formal parliamentary system of party politics. As soon as a party comes to power, it naturally wants to remain and consolidate itself in power. There is a plausible reason for this : A party comes to power and forces a government with a programme. Four or five years are not enough to implement that programme. Therefore, the party must ensure another term in office. In order to guarantee re-election in the next elections, automatically a party in power takes to the practice of indoctrination and varying degrees of intellectual regimentation of the people. Education under the formal parliamentary system is influenced by parties in power and this is a kind of intellectual regimentation, which may be almost imperceptible.

Free and compulsory primary education is considered a great democratic achievement. It is not considered enough to say free education, it must also be compulsory. But compulsory education may have two sides. You must go to school and as soon as you go to school, you are trained and conditioned in certain ways. Before you even learn the ABC, you are trained to salute a flag or the picture of a man ; books are prescribed and you cannot use any other book than the ones prescribed by a particular government. The result, if not the purpose, of this kind of education, particularly in previously illiterate countries, is to create a high

degree of conformism and subservience to an established order. Therefore, under a purely formal democratic system in a backward country it is impossible—at least the possibility is extremely remote—to raise the intellectual and cultural level of the people through government-sponsored education. Consequently, if we cannot find a different approach to the problem of educating the people, in the sense of laying the foundation of democracy, democracy would appear to be impossible. Free and compulsory primary education is not enough.

New Humanism indicates a new approach to the problem of education, which suggests that, given the opportunity, every human being is capable of developing his or her potentialities almost without limit. It goes on to say that, since it is not in the interest nor in the power of governments to afford this opportunity to all citizens, the problem must be tackled by individuals who feel the necessity of a new approach to the political problem. Otherwise, the problem will never be solved, and the world will not come out of the present impasse.

Humanists do not confine their concern with the life of society to the small sector of human existence which is conventionally called politics. But by their new approach, they indicate a way out of the present crisis of politics and its problem. Politics is the predominating passion of people in public life, and in India particularly of the educated middle class. Precisely because they are educated, the political approach of New Humanism should appeal to them. And because it is widely felt that unless the political problem is solved, no other problem can be solved, the political aspect of the humanist philosophy is of great significance and must be properly thought out and understood.

The humanist approach to political problems results from a realisation of the futility of political activity as hitherto practised. One political party after another has come and offered a new heaven on earth, a new order, a new society, promising the people everything they need. Party after party has come to power and mismanaged affairs, and yet another party followed. Yet, in so far as the object of leading mankind as a whole towards greater freedom and progress, intellectual accomplishment and spiritual contentment is concerned, political practice has been completely futile.

Yet, human society, whether conceived as One World on the national scale, must subsist, and if it does not progress, it will disintegrate. We cannot break up human society into the small groups of pre-historical age. The affairs of large communities have to be administered, and that administration is politics. Therefore, Humanism must offer a solution to the political problems also, if its larger appeal, its approach to the more fundamental problems of human life, is to find a response.

The starting point of the humanist approach to political problems is that the relation between the individual and the State, between man and society, between freedom and organisation, cannot be solved unless man, the individual, and his freedom, is given an at least equally important place in these political equations. Until now, political thinking has placed all emphasis on the interests of the State. For the interest of the State, everything is justified. The Constitution of a democratic State includes an imposing catalogue of civil rights, but they all include also one clause which entitles the executive to suspend the entire Constitution—if necessary, in the interest of the State. That is to say, for the interest of the State, the freedom of the constituent units of the State can be completely abolished.

Similarly, social welfare is considered as something bigger than individual welfare. But what is social welfare if not the sum total of the welfare individually enjoyed by men and women. No freedom, no welfare, no progress or prosperity can be actually experienced except by individuals. The concept of national prosperity and greatness, of social progress, which ignores that all these blessings of a nation or society can be measured only by the progress, prosperity, welfare and freedom of its individual constituents—is a fraud and a delusion.

We are dealing with relations in which emphasis has always been laid on one of the related things only : man has always been relegated to the subsidiary position. In the relation between the State and the individual, between man and society, everything else was always more important than man. So also, when we think in terms of freedom and organisation, we remember that we must be free to organise and that organisations must be free to do this or that, but we are apt to forget that organisation has no sense and purpose except to increase our freedom.

The philosophy of New Humanism rejects this approach and starts in everything from man and his needs. The beginning is man ; man is the original constituent of society, as the citizen is the basic unit of the State. Man created both as means for his freedom. Therefore, not only should we give at least equal weight to the two related things, but primacy must be given to man, the individual human being.

This cannot be done by the existing political parties, either of the Right or of the Left, either democratic, dictatorial, liberal or conservative. Because all of them, in the last analysis, are collectivist by their nature as political parties. All of them profess to serve a collective concept, either a State or a nation or a class or society with a capital S. Therefore a new kind of political practice is necessary which must begin from the root ; which, knowing that education is the precondition of democracy, must apply itself to the education of the people.

Education for democracy does not consist in teaching just reading and writing, but in making the people conscious of their humanness, to make them conscious of their right to exist as human beings, in decency and dignity. Education means to help them to think, to apply their reason. That is to say, the new humanist political practice must begin as a cultural movement. It must get out of the struggle for power of the political parties. Even a humanist political party, to have to come to power, would have to join the scramble, would have to play the game according to its rules ; otherwise it would stand no chance at all. And if it refuses to play the game, it is not a political party in the proper definition of the term.

Political parties indulge in this scramble not because they are composed of bad men or because one is worse than the other. This is what politics has come to be, and as soon as you join the game, you must abide by its rule. The rules are laid down ; they are based on the backwardness of the people. And in this game, education for Democracy has no place, because ignorant and backward people can be more easily deceived and swayed. Therefore, humanist politics starts with the eschewing of the whole game of fighting for political power according to the old rules of the game. That is not a matter of renunciation. It is a well thought out new political practice and procedure.

It starts by analysing the concept of power. Power is a means to an end. But over the all-absorbing means, the end is invariably forgotten. After the first stage of capturing power, comes the second stage of trying to retain it. And if on the record of what a party can do in power it cannot be re-elected into power, then it tightens the screws of the regime and establishes a dictatorship, even if it does so still with the imagined purpose of remaining in power to enforce a democratic programme.

The scramble for power creates a vicious circle. Maintaining that State power is now indispensable for social change, humanist politics attacks the problem from the root, which is man. It states that man is the basic unit of society. Therefore, a free society can have no meaning except in the form of freedom of the individual human beings. In order to achieve greater freedom, the conscious urge for freedom, the desire for a democratic society, for a democratic way of life, must be awakened in a growing number of individuals. Because any democratic change in society can be brought about only by the basic individual constituents of society and unless these have the conscious desire to bring about that change, it cannot be brought about.

It might be argued by enthusiasts of social change that that will take a very long time. That is not necessarily so. But assuming that it will take a very long time, is there any alternative? And it would have to be such an alternative as would bring about the kind of social change that we want to bring about, namely, greater freedom for the individual constituents of society. Of course, those who still have faith in the dictatorial alternatives will not see the force of this argument. But those who have lost the faith that freedom can be attained by means of an even temporary denial of freedom, those who are alarmed by the signs of growing regimentation and eclipse of the individual everywhere, they have no other alternative. Humanist politics is the only way before them.

But given the confidence in man and his innate rationality which is the essence of the philosophy of Humanism, there is no ground to be so hopeless and desparate. It is not going to be an endless process leading nowhere. Impatient revolutionaries have a very facile argument. They say: Those in power prevent

change ; to capture power through parliamentary channels is not possible ; therefore, a revolutionary political party, which wants to reconstruct society and establish freedom, must capture power by insurrectionary means and set up its dictatorship to prevent counter-revolution. Then will come the time to think of freedom and democracy on a higher plane.

Apart from the fallacious assumption that dictatorship could lead to a higher form of democracy, there is the factual and pragmatically established argument that this hypothetical shortcut to social change through insurrection is closed in our time. The days are gone when a determined minority party could capture power through an insurrection, as happened in the French and Russian Revolutions. If you look at the history of revolutions since the Russian Revolution, it is an unbroken history of defeats. Modern States are possessed of such formidable armed forces, and so very highly mechanised and organised, that any attempt of a minority to capture power by armed insurrection is bound to be crushed.

In a country like India, where the State may not have those advantages of other modern and highly militarised and organised States, the security of the established order is based on the blind faith and backwardness of the people. In the case of any attempt to overthrow the present government by armed force, you will find the vast bulk of the population not on the side of the revolution meant for them, but rallying around the government which for all they are told is something almost divine, combining the qualities of father and mother, saints and worshippers of saints.

All other ways being closed, if we reject the old traditional way, and the lure of the shortcut being no longer a practical proposition, the humanist way seems to be the only way that leads in the direction where we want to go. If this is explained, every sensible human being should be expected to travel it. The humanist appeal is therefore addressed to all sensible people, to all those who can no longer be deluded by romantic or demagogic fallacies, but want the reality of freedom. Whoever agrees with the reasoning of New Humanism as a philosophy will ultimately also adopt the political practice which flows from it.

To apply these ideas to our own circumstances, what will be

the humanist political approach to the Indian situation? Elections will take place in two years' time in our country. Formally, it may be a perfectly democratic election by universal suffrage. By current notions, nothing better could be desired. But on entering this gate of freedom, if we cast a glance at the rest of the world to see where universal suffrage has led in practice, it does not appear to be such a very inspiring example. Why is that so? Because people are not educated for Democracy. And in such a country, universal suffrage means that there will be a many times larger number of ignorant and politically uninformed, indiscriminating voters than have ever been known to have participated in an election anywhere, and who can be very easily swayed by appeals to emotions, religious prejudices and primitive sentiments.

If that is the highest ideal of democratic politics, then nothing better can be expected than the present state of affairs. The party in power will be returned to power. It will guarantee this by maintaining the cultural and intellectual status quo. Because, to reconstruct India is a matter of many years. Therefore, the party in power must remain in power almost indefinitely if it wishes to accomplish its programme even partially. And to return the party in power back to power, again and again, the present state of ignorance of the people is the best guarantee and necessary precondition.

Thus, the country may have independence, we may even become a Great Power, but all that glory would be built on the neglect, if not suppression of the human individuals who are the basic units of the nation, and that will mean an ever further lowering of the cultural level of the people. We have seen this happening in many other countries where modern technical progress was superimposed on a culturally backward society and formal democracy was practised in the absence of any appreciation of the democratic way of life and of a general urge for individual freedom.

The essence of parliamentary democracy is believed to be the existence of opposition parties. In our country also, attempts have been made to have an opposition party. In order to come to power, the opposition party must be able to sway the majority of voters away from the party at present in power. We have

seen how voters are swayed. Therefore, an opposition party, which wants to succeed in the given atmosphere, has to appeal to the same backwardness, the same ignorance, the same prejudices and blind religious faith of the people as does the party in power. Thus, even the opposition party will be no guarantee for democracy, indeed it is more likely to reinforce and galvanise the very conditions which a truly democratic practice should tend to remove.

Formal parliamentary democracy can be practised in our country only by maintaining the present social and cultural backwardness of the people. What meaning can that kind of democracy have for those who are moved by love of freedom? They are compelled to search for another way, and there is another way. It begins with the decision to change that very condition on which political parties thrive, by blasting the foundation on which this structure of a fake democracy is built; that is to say, by attacking the backwardness, the ignorance, the blind faith of the people, which make the vast bulk of the electorate so easily amenable to demagoguery.

Needless to say, a democracy cannot be educated from today to tomorrow. But a beginning can be made here and now. For example, if in the next elections there would be only two-hundred people throughout the country ready to practise humanist politics, they could begin work in a dozen constituencies and there begin the task of awakening the urge for freedom in the individuals and raise the intellectual and cultural level of the people. These are after all not just high-sounding phrase; they express themselves concretely in a change of outlook and of their backward habits. When election time comes, we shall tell them: You may vote for any party you like, but before you vote, think; don't be carried away by election speeches; use your brains; examine the programmes and promises, and the record of the people who make them. Anybody may come and say, for instance, that he will build Socialism when in power. Ask him what Socialism will mean to you, and then think if he can do what he promises. We don't say that he is telling a lie; but we shall also talk with the people about Socialism, and about the conditions in the country as they are, and what changes the people really want, and then they will understand that no party

with the best intentions can make of Indian society a socialist society, not in ten years' time, assuming that Socialism is considered to be the highest ideal.

In that way, at least a few members in each community will be able to examine election promises in a critical spirit. Half a dozen of them in a constituency will act as a powerful catalyst. They will infect others with their habit of thinking and critical discrimination, so that perhaps already in the next elections one or two percent of the voters will cast their vote intelligently and with a point of view of their own from which to judge the persons and programmes for whom their vote is canvassed. A few independent men who are not professional politicians may not make themselves felt immediately in the legislatures. But the foundation will be laid for a really democratic practice. If this work will be continued in the five years until the next elections, the electorate of that constituency will have become a small democracy.

If we were to go on doing this in one constituency after another, it might take a hundred years. But it will not be so. Once the example is set and the spirit gets abroad, the momentum will grow and the movement will spread much faster than anybody can imagine today. The humanist political approach is that by creating these small islands of democracy and freedom, the nucleus of a humanist democratic society will be created, the kind of society in which a Humanist would wish to live. Example is better than precept, and by creating these small democratic islands, we are recreating society as a whole. Humanist democratic education will not only create a discriminating electorate, but also teach people to live a cooperative life, to transform their local community into a small cooperative commonwealth, a local democratic republic. As the example spreads, these will be the organised basis of the society we want.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of humanist practice is that its political ideal is not of the kind to be achieved at some particular point of time in an incalculable future. For Humanists, means and end are not so differentiated. The means are also part of the end. We are not setting up a perfectionist ideal to be achieved perhaps two-hundred years hence. We say that a good and rational society will be a society which is composed of good and rational human beings. And we say that every

human being is potentially rational and therefore potentially good, that is, moral. Small groups of good and rational men will be the concrete beginning for the creation of a good and rational human society, which is the object of all humanist politics. Such a beginning is bound to spread and the process will accelerate as its results become known. ✓

We are not discouraged by the long way ahead of us. Every day of our life, by acting as Humanists, we approximate our ideal. This approach to political practice opens a new outlook and perspective before us, which can give us fresh hope and a strong conviction. When that spirit grows in a sufficiently large number of people, and they begin to function as a new catalytic element in society, that society is bound to be affected by their action and their spirit, and sooner or later by their whole philosophy. Because that philosophy does not just speculate and preach, but is practised by the people who are spreading it, and who are spreading it by living it. It has become axiomatic that environment shapes men. But a Humanist will prove that men can also shape their environments.

If a philosophy is lived instead of being only preached, it has much greater influence than one which is preached but mostly denied in the living of those who preach it. A Humanist says : I must act as a rational and moral human being ; as such I appeal to the innate reason and morality of my fellow human beings. And I shall appeal to them not only by precept, but by my behaviour. If my behaviour appeals to them, they will realise that it is my philosophy which appeals to them. Thus, as a social being, a Humanist can attain his ideal every day of his life. And his political approach results from this attitude to his fellow beings, from this confidence in the innate, potential, rationality and morality of all human beings. This new spirit can be lived and practised everywhere in the world. By its spread the political life of India also can be changed for the better. And that change can become perceptible perhaps already within a few years' time.

But we would defeat the object of this purification and rationalisation of politics if we would go and pose as if we were better people than others, and therefore asked the people to vote for us, instead of voting for others. The object of humanist politics will be served by simply making it impossible for anybody

to deceive the people and sway them like dumb-driven cattle. In proportion as this much is achieved, the foundation for freedom and democracy will be laid, and become more and more solid and safe. Then the time will come when a centralised Leviathan can no longer pose as a democracy, but a democratic State composed of a number of local democratic republics will rise in which direct democracy is a reality. It will come into being not by passing of laws, not by imposition from above, but because local democracies will be in existence as a political reality and give the impress of their structure on the State as a whole.

CHAPTER XII

INTEGRAL HUMANISM*

A Social Philosophy

All thinking men agree that there is something wrong somewhere in the contemporary world. The crassest expression of that is the fact that, while nobody is consciously or deliberately aiming at a war, nevertheless the world is actually drifting in that direction. Mankind seems to have lost grip on its own destiny. This realisation expresses itself in the frequent use of the term crisis.

The root of this crisis has been traced by various thinkers with different predispositions to different causes and different spheres of human activity and their theoretical background. Some call it an economic crisis due to the fact that the economic organisation of the world has lost its balance, and as a result things have become chaotic; and if only this economy could be replaced by a more stable and better organisation, all the evils of the modern world would be cured.

This theory is more than a hundred years old. In these hundred years, more and more people have been influenced by this opinion, until to-day most parties and persons engaged in efforts to remake the world accept this point of view, which is based on the doctrine of economic determinism. This view is not only held by the political left, but widely shared, though not necessarily acknowledged, even by conservatives and reactionaries. If socialisation is the panacea of the one, free private enterprise is that of the others, both being economic concepts. According to both, the economic organisation of society determines all other forms of social activities and if things have gone out of gear, the

* Lecture delivered at Patna University, 1949.

only thing we have to do is to accept their respective economic remedies.

Others call the crisis of our time a political crisis. They say that, in consequence of the horrors of two world wars, people have lost faith in the modern political institutions. Others have drawn the conclusion that the modern political institutions have revealed certain inadequacies and if better institutions replace the present ones, the crisis will be solved.

There is yet another school among the sociologists, who try to combine the findings of all the others and introduce certain psychological considerations in it, and in a general way call it a cultural crisis. But even if we could define culture and agree that there is a cultural crisis, how does this help us when trying to solve the economic and political problems which are certainly also aspects of the crisis of the contemporary world?

If we examine the condition of the world in all fields of human activity, we must come to the conclusion that the crisis is deeper than merely an economic or a political or even a cultural crisis. It is not that just any one department of human activities has gone out of gear and in consequence the entire world is disorganised. If we must give it a name, it could be called a crisis of existence, because the whole of human existence has been thrown into chaos and confusion. We find disharmony and unreasonableness in all departments of human life, and these are symptoms of crisis.

Examining this phenomenon, some people have come to the conclusion that the cause of the present state of things is that human affairs are no longer directed and controlled deliberately through the exercise of individual reason and judgment. In the case of perhaps ninety-five per cent of human beings, the individual personality is completely eclipsed, unconscious and inoperative. Individuals do not have anything to say, much less can they influence the guidance of human affairs either at home or abroad. Reason and discrimination are at a discount in public life because these can be exercised only by individuals, and the individual itself is at a discount. In consequence, a small minority of self-willed and often self-appointed men at the helm of affairs manage to guide everything according to their own proclivities or fixed ideas, irrespective of the enormous volume of reason that could

be brought to bear on world affairs if the potential rationality of all human beings would assert itself in an intelligently expressed public opinion. Is it possible to change this state of affairs?

That question can be answered only if we start from an understanding of human nature. If human nature is creative and capable of taking rational initiative, then conditions can be changed. But if the human being is by nature fatalistic, if man must believe in something and be guided by faith and illusions, then it cannot be changed. All the modern architects of social reconstruction are agreed on the basic proposition that man is the maker of history. History is a record of human activities, failures or achievements of his own making. If we have to state the fact that the overwhelming majority of men have nothing to do in what is happening in the world, that means that they have ceased to be the makers of history, the architects of their destiny. A few men have become the makers of the destiny of all. And this will not be changed by replacing one group of mentors by any other group of mentors. Some may claim that they know better what is good for the people, but others make the same claim. Only the people themselves can know what they really want and need. But they have lost the power and capacity, they have at any rate lost the confidence, that they can judge for themselves.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that, unless the average man and woman recover their capacity to think, and judge for themselves what is good or bad, for them and generally, and become conscious of the fact that whatever exists in the world of men was created by men and women like themselves; that, if there is to be any future for man, it must also be made by man,—we cannot advance one single step in the direction of a way out of the crisis. Unless we can find a way by which man can regain faith in himself, there will be no freedom and no future for man. From time immemorial, man has believed in many things. But except for a very few exceptions, men never believed in themselves. When a creator is not conscious that it is his function to create, that is certainly a strange and sad situation. But this is where the crisis of our time has its roots.

This view of placing man in the position of supremacy and primacy and maintaining that man precedes everything that

exists, that society itself is the creation of men, that all history is the creation of man, that all economic and political institutions are the creation of man, and that therefore individual man must have the position of priority in relation to all of these—this view has been held by the profoundest and most advanced thinkers of all times. But it was only at the close of the European Middle-Ages, when the intelligence of that continent revolted against the spiritual tyranny of the Catholic Church, that this philosophy of placing man in the centre of things found wider acceptance. Because the human being was the central point of their philosophy, the leaders of the European Renaissance called themselves Humanists. They have gone down in history as Humanists, and their ideas and thoughts are known in history as Humanism.

But we can trace the history of Humanism further back, at least to the philosophers of ancient Greece. And if we search in our own past, we shall discover strands of similar humanist thought in Indian history also. Only, unfortunately, those chapters of ancient Indian thought have been forgotten, and in consequence, in India more than anywhere else, man, the individual, has been forgotten to-day. The question arises, why, when Humanism is such an old and venerable tradition in the history of human thought, things could yet have come to such a pass, and why this line of thought could not commend itself to a larger number of people and hence did not determine the generally accepted way of life. This question must be answered, because this deplorable fact is the cause of the crisis of our time.

Revolting against organised religious faith, which had become a spiritual tyranny, the philosophers of the Renaissance declared man to be sovereign. But the defect was that the people who had talked about man as the centre of all things and attached such a high value to the human being, kept the concept of man himself clouded in mystery. And how could they help it? There was no scientific explanation of man. Therefore this view of man was bound to degenerate into some form of mysticism, and even in a new religion.

Even to-day many of those who want a revival of Humanism are inclined towards a religious point of view. A man like Jacques Maritain, certainly a Humanist, is the best example for this. He believes that a restatement of Christianity can take the

world out of the present crisis and give man back his moral sanity. Similarly is the case with the Quakers and other humanitarian groups of reformers, who attach the highest importance to man, but cannot get away from the fallacy of subordinating man to some super-human and super-natural agencies.

We have known all sorts of slavery and revolt against slavery. But the worst form of slavery is spiritual slavery, and no progress is possible unless it is preceded by freeing the minds of men from that slavery. If man was by nature subordinated to super-natural and super-human powers beyond his comprehension and control, all talk about placing man in the centre of things is meaningless. These assumptions mean that man is born slave and will stay a slave and can never come out of his slavery. This so-called spiritual point of view is only a sublimation of slavery, and it has been the evil genius of human history throughout. Whenever any form of revolt against terrestrial oppression has taken place except on the background of at least an attempt to revolt against this most fundamental spiritual slavery, it has led to defeat. Revolutions have taken place, but if they were not preceded by a philosophical revolution, they never succeeded. Historians record that fact, but generally do not explain it.

We can get out of the blind-alley in which earlier humanist thought has led only with the help of the knowledge which man has accumulated since the days of the European Renaissance. Since those days, human knowledge has expanded enormously. But it was the men of the Renaissance themselves who began to throw the searchlight of their inquisitiveness in all the dark corners of nature. Since their days, the store of knowledge about nature has grown considerably. But it was not until very recently that a scientific search into the nature of man himself was undertaken, and still more recently that a plausible hypothesis could be set up about man's place in nature, on the basis of scientific knowledge.

The movement for a humanist revival, starting from the attempt to explain what is human nature, has been called Scientific or simply New Humanism as distinct from the older Humanism which took man for granted as an elementary indefinable, which shifted man's blind belief simply from God to Man, while man remained a mystery, himself a matter of faith.

New Humanism tries to go into the genesis of man and to examine the background out of which man emerges in nature. The study of science establishes that there is nothing extra-natural in man; nowhere in his evolution does anything extra-neous to his own nature enter into this process. Whatever we call human nature, man's attributes and potentialities, can be strictly deduced from the background of the evolving physical Universe. In so far as modern science has acquired a good deal of knowledge of this background, it is now possible to dispense with many assumptitons and prejudices, which were at some time or other set up by way of hypotheses, and to have a rational scientific understanding of human nature.

This is very important not only from the theoretical point of view, but for very concrete and practical considerations of man's life in society. When attempts are made in our time to formulate a new social philosophy, it is maintained that, owing to the development of technology and the expansion of communications in the modern world, human relations have decisively altered, and any rules for the governance of those relations must be adjusted to those changed conditions. Rules which were good enough for relations existing under different conditions cannot be applied under the changed circumstances of the modern world.

That sounds plausible. But some sociologists who propound these ideas do not take the one necessary step forward which would give to all these changes a significance, satisfactory for the life of man. And as long as they do not take that step, their efforts will be useless. What is the decisive category of all social sciences? It is man. Society has men for its constituent units. And if we want to have any ideas or rules for governing the changing relations between men and society, we must have first an idea about the nature of man, just as you cannot study physics unless you have knowledge of the elementary constituents of the matter with which physics is concerned.

When modern political theories were first conceived, all thinkers started with a certain idea of man. Some said, like Rousseau, that man is simple and good by nature, and civilization degenerates and corrupts him. Others still held to the older idea that it is human nature to believe, and human existence cannot be sustained unless it is anchored in the belief in some-

thing super-human. However, in the seventeenth century, a school of thought gradually developed which, while recognising the complexity of human nature, laid emphasis on reason as the distinctive characteristic of humanity. A whole structure of social and political thought was built on that idea. Throughout the eighteenth century and even in the beginning of the 19th century, this idea predominated; it was widely held that man is essentially rational, and all appeals of social progress or political revolution had to be addressed to the reasoning capacity of man. But there were also other trends of social thought which tried to push this idea into the background, and confronted it with the more superficial strata of the human personality, which appeared to contradict the idea of man's essential rationality. According to them, instincts and emotions are the decisive elements in human nature, and emotions would always overwhelm reason.

Modern philosophers, and especially social philosophy, have come very largely under the influence of this emphasis on man's essential emotionalism. For instance Bergson, but also many others, attributed to emotion by far the greater role as a determinant of human action and behaviour. But emotions cannot be exactly known; they have to be taken for granted as something given in the make-up of man; however much we may try to analyse them, they have an element of unpredictability and you cannot say that they were either correct or mistaken.

This view of human nature brought about a relapse and a reversal in social science, away from the trend which was to make man the maker of his world. Therefore, since the early days of the twentieth century, we have this curious spectacle of a "scientific" religious revival, and a whole host of men of science in frantic search of God. Human knowledge is never perfect. But to draw from this fact the conclusion that, whenever we come across something unknown, it must be something unknowable—that amounts to installing ignorance as a godhead.

This development was the result of a certain ideological reaction which followed upon the French Revolution. It was motivated by various factors. As revolutionary political theories developed, which challenged the sanctity of the established order by declaring that man is the maker of his world, the advocates of the old order went over to the offensive. When they found that they

could not challenge the humanist sanction of the forces of progress, they fell back on the age-old authority of a super-human sanction, and consciously or unconsciously, mostly perhaps unconsciously, those modern scientists who tend to invest all that they do not yet know with the mystic halo of something unknowable, have played into their hands.

Later in our time, when one world war was followed by another and a third one is threatening now the whole world with disaster, a sense of horror, despair and helplessness appeared to leave man no other alternative but to relapse into the religious mode of thought, which historically belongs to the Middle-Ages. Confronted with this spectacle of a total reversal of human development, the bolder thinkers of our time have come to the conclusion that, unless the sanction for social change and a further development of man and society can be found in man himself, rooted in human nature, all change can only be for the worse.

Because, it is quite clear that, if man cannot do anything by himself, he must merge himself in this modern monstrosity called the masses. Nothing but this self-abasement of the individual in mass meetings, mass prayers, mass demonstrations can give to the man who does not believe in himself a sense of security and power. The power of the masses is extolled so much that some of the detractors of Humanism, who do not believe in the old God any more, have made a new god of the masses. But this God is an insult to the good old God as well as to men. Yet we find modern men worshipping this strange god which they have themselves created out of their own ignorance and lack of faith in themselves.

Only a robust Humanism can put an end to these perverse cults, by striking at their roots, which lie in ignorance and a glorification of this ignorance. This new Humanism is an integral Humanism, distinguished from the older forms of Humanism, which were more poetic and romantic, by being strictly based on a scientific knowledge of man and human nature. But scientific knowledge as learned in schools and colleges is not enough to make a Humanist. You may learn something about physics and yet not be a scientist. There may be even recognised scientists who have not necessarily imbibed the scientific spirit. Knowledge in our days has become departmentalised. But true

scientific knowledge presupposes an understanding and coordination of all the departments of science. The function of philosophy is precisely that. It must supply a coherent picture of the various branches of knowledge acquired by human experience at a given time. An integrated picture of the knowledge of modern science leads to an integral scientific Humanism, because it can explain man.

Man is said to have a soul and the soul is the greatest thing about man, and there are various theories about the nature of the soul. But if you study all that is known about man, you find no place where this extraneous and mystic element of a soul could have entered into man. It is said that the soul is something divine, and so are all man's higher emotions. But like the soul, emotions also do not enter man from without, even if they may be evoked by external stimulation. Modern science knows a good deal about man's emotions, and can trace them wholly to physico-chemical processes. Once you know these processes, you can actually change the emotions of men. We can therefore make the hypothetical assertion that emotions have no extra-physical origin or significance. Of the soul, however, nothing is known for the obvious reasons that there is no such thing. But if it is identified with man's highest emotions, then it is reduced to a part of man's psycho-physiological nature.

Much emphasis is laid in modern theories on instincts and intuition, on which moral judgment is supposed to be based in preference to man's reason and intelligence. But if we trace the biological development of man back beyond the appearance of the human species, you can find rudimentary forms of the power of thinking and reasoning and even of moral judgment already in the lower animals. Instinct and intuition are nothing mysterious, but an undifferentiated form of rationalism, which can however teach us a good deal about the working of man's reason. So long as the cortex in the cerebral processes was not sufficiently differentiated, these functions took place in the neural system as a mechanical biological reaction. Therefore they cannot be analysed in terms of conscious thought. But the cerebral activity was there in elementary form even before the appearance of *homo sapiens*.

We can trace the biological evolution of man further through the entire process of natural evolution back to inorganic matter. There is supposed to be a hiatus somewhere. This hiatus is, so to say, the last leg on which the doctrine of creation stands today, of which the assumption of the soul is a part. Assuming that there is a "missing link", the problem is of an adequate hypothesis. Two hypotheses are possible. One is the old hypothesis of creation, according to which a God took it in his head to create the world. The other hypothesis is that, out of the background of inanimate nature, life evolved through a certain combination of material substances under particular circumstances and conditions. This hypothesis is logically more plausible and there is more empirical evidence in its favour than for the former hypothesis, even if it is not yet conclusively proved.

That places the origin of man plainly into the background of the physical Universe. The physical Universe is a harmonious and law-governed system. The law-governedness of this system, of which man is a part, expresses itself in man as his capacity for reason and judgment. Because the background of physical nature, out of which man has grown as the highest product of evolution, is harmonious and law-governed, therefore the elements of harmony and law-governedness are also inherent in man. They are the foundation of the special human qualities.

If that is accepted, then we have also laid the foundation for the belief in the basic equality of all men. The difference between an ordinary man and a great man becomes a difference only of degree, and may be caused only because the great man had better opportunities to develop his potentialities than ordinary men have. There may be real differences based on abnormalities. Even genius is a form of abnormality. It may be a very desirable disease, but it is a form of disease, a deviation from the norms of the species. A wide variety of special traits, gifts and characteristics in ordinary human beings does not affect this basic equality.

This view of human nature gives us a new approach to the problem of social reorganisation and opens up new prospects for solving the crisis in all spheres of human life from which men suffer in our time. This new approach allows us to start from the assumption that man can think for himself, that man

has created his world and that he can re-make it according to his own decision rationally arrived at. That is possible on the assumption that man is essentially rational.

Of course, if you ask me whether I maintain that man is really rational, I must admit that very often he is not. But that does not invalidate the humanist assumption. It is so because man has been told for ages that his nature is to believe and to follow some higher authority, and that, trying to think for himself, he has fallen from grace. We have to work hard to atone for this sin of our forefathers in order to make man conscious of his humanness and that his fate is not preordained by any super-natural power or Divine Will. That false belief was the basis of man's subordination to successive oppressive terrestrial powers also, and if we want to make man free, if we want to have a free society, we must first make him free of these unfounded beliefs.

Any significant change in the institutional structure of society has been preceded by a change in the thinking processes of men. Every political revolution has been preceded by a philosophical revolution. The modern age started with the Renaissance, which was a revolt of man against God. It came to a dead end because a god was made of man in the absence of a more scientific explanation of man. What the world needs to-day is a new Renaissance, a revolt against those new mystic gods which man, or some men, or men in the mass, are supposed to be. Man has been made into gods, into kings and leaders and supermen. But never yet has man been satisfied and proud to be just man. When men will be content and proud that they are men, and that man is rational and has endless potentialities in him, then only shall we experience a reconstruction of society into an order of freedom as we want it to be.

There have been changes in social institutions in the past, but they were all imposed by some men on other men from the top. New Constitutions have been framed from time to time and were imposed on people who had no way of knowing whether those Constitutions were good or bad, and why they were so. The modern ideal is democracy, which means self-government of the people. But the people themselves never think that it is really they who might govern. They have come to believe that any

Reason
for man
freedom
intrinsic
action

Need
a new
Renaissance

✓

change must begin with a group of well-meaning men, having the blue-print of a new social order in their heads, capturing power and with the help of that power imposing their idea of a new order.

That is a great fallacy. Even assuming their ideas are good, the process contradicts all interpretations of democracy. This is truly a case of playing Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. They want a democracy, but without the demos. But there can be no democracy when the demos knows nothing about it. Institutions are after all run by men. Good institutions cannot persist unless they are run by good men. A good government cannot be established unless the demos can discriminate between what is good and what is bad for their society. For this we must appeal to man's rationality. If that appears to be a long process, that is our atonement for the sins of our fathers who deprived man of faith in himself. But how long the process will be, that also depends to a large extent on us.

Human beings being essentially rational, if we persistently appeal to their reason, and not place premiums on unreason, they will ultimately respond to the appeal to their reason rather than to any other appeal, because it is only through the application of their reason that they can ever establish a government of themselves and by themselves, and make a success of such a government. It appears so obvious and so simple, and yet this will be truly a revolution, that philosophical revolution without which no social change in the direction of greater freedom is possible.

New Humanism is not an abstract philosophy, nor merely a social philosophy or a political or economic theory. It is a set of principles which have relevance to all branches of man's life and social existence and show a way towards their reorganisation. They are principles which can inspire mankind to take things in their own hand and shape their social world according to their reason and their needs. New Humanism has grown out of the experience of a perennial crisis, which has become all-pervasive, affecting the entire existence of man, and it is that very crisis which has inspired some of the bolder spirits of our time to rethink mankind's entire history and tradition and come to the conclusion that, unless man can recover his confidence in himself, society cannot be reconstructed as a happy and harmonious abode for all.

New Humanism is a scientific integral philosophy. The human being is taken not only in the context of society, but of the whole Universe. It is not an anarchic individualism, because a point has no existence except in space. Similarly, while individuals cannot exist independent of society, yet society is no more than an integration of individuals, and if you want a good society, you must have good individuals. Until now, we have put the cart before the horse, and said that we must have a good society in order to have good men. That led to the theory that in order to reconstruct society, we must capture power first, and that this end justifies all means. At that point all "goodness" goes by the board. To make a good society even bad means are justified. But bad means spoil good men. In the process, good men become bad. And bad men cannot make a good society.

New Humanism is not a closed system. Being based on experience and science, it will evolve as experience grows and science develops. It can be considerably elaborated and improved. But it is decidedly a new approach which promises to lead to better results than any other known so far. All the old avenues have led where we did not want to go. Therefore we must blaze a new trail. The ideas and principles of New Humanism appeal to the best in man, and there must be enough men and women in the world who will respond to an appeal to all that is best in them.

CHAPTER XIII

HUMAN NATURE AND HUMANIST PRACTICE*

Although, as an integral part of a comprehensive system of thought, New Humanism endeavours to explain the totality of phenomena, it is eminently a social philosophy, applicable to human behaviour and human relations. Therefore, it must necessarily also have its political aspect. But too much importance has been attached to political activities and political institutions during the last two-hundred years, and that has diverted the attention of men from more fundamental aspects of social existence, which ultimately also influence political behaviour and relations. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with the practice of New Humanism, to start with, in fields of what may be called non-political human relations and behaviour.

New Humanism is not a system of contemplative thought. It has not been developed in the seclusion of the ivory tower. Grown out of the experience of social action, its test will be in the social experience of active human beings. Some people are sceptic on this point and ask : Human nature being what it is, is not New Humanism, based on rational and moral behaviour, a mere Utopia ?

This doubt arises on the background of an idea of human nature which has been haunting and vitiating human thought throughout the ages. It is the doubt expressed in the age-old question : Can human nature change ? If we share the traditional view that human nature is what it is ; that there are certain immutable factors in human nature and therefore it can never change, well, then all attempts to practise New Humanism will have to be abandoned. Much worse : all attempts for creating any new social order of freedom would also have to be abandoned. Because if human nature cannot change, freedom would always be abused.

* Being the second of two lectures on The Philosophy and Practice of New Humanism, delivered at the Blavatsky Lodge, Bombay, 26-1-49.

Yet, the desire to create new social relations and institutions allowing for greater freedom is a need widely and passionately felt by a very large section of modern humanity, and has been so in all periods of human history. Is it then possible that a need so universally felt by human beings could be contradictory to human nature, as would have to be the case if it was true that human nature cannot be changed? How could such a contradictory position come about? It has been arrived at by side-tracking the real issue and reversing the process which underlies all human progress; by arguing that human nature by itself cannot change, but if the social institutions are changed, then these may eventually change human nature.

This wrongly conceived procedure of giving priority to institutions, leaving individual men and women in the meantime to their fate, has been the basic cause of the present crisis, because it has led into a vicious circle: If good institutions alone can change human nature for the better, it is also a fact of experience that only good men can create good institutions; institutions are as good as the men who create them. To break this vicious circle, Humanism gives priority to individual human beings. Humanist practice consists first and foremost in developing the human personality, and in increasing the number of rational and moral human beings, who alone will make it possible to create political and social institutions that will not be Franksteins, not fetters on further development of the human personality, but instruments for further human progress and for the creation of new patterns of a higher human culture.

The contention is that the basic element and inherent characteristic of the supposedly unchangeable human nature is the urge to believe, that to believe is human nature. To believe means to accept something as given, to take certain things for granted, to admit that there is a limit to human understanding and human knowledge, and that there are things beyond this dividing line which must simply be assumed as established. In other words, belief in something super-natural, super-human, transcendental, is the foundation of human nature, and it is maintained that this foundation can never be shaken.

In an article recently published by an Indian University, in which the problem of the secular State is discussed, the learned

author makes the statement that, religion having been the most important element in India's social life and the predominating factor in Indian culture, to create a secular State in the sense of modern western political science, is not possible in India. This is applying the dictum that human nature never changes to the Indian situation : to believe is the nature of Indian mankind. Therefore, to have political and social institutions which will have a secular foundation and be guided by rational thinking, is not possible in India.

If we start from the assumption, that human nature never changes, we can never get out of this vicious circle, and the idea of progress has to be abandoned. Progress, after all, is to be measured by the development of individual men and women. A community cannot grow unless its progress is expressed in its individual members. If there is something immutable in human nature, it means that there is a limit to human progress. Humanism challenges this time-honoured belief, and does so not arbitrarily and dogmatically, but on the strength of modern scientific knowledge.

The study of the original relation between man and nature and the investigations of anthropology have revealed that primitive man is not given to blind faith. It has even been explained by historians of culture that what is known as prejudices, superstitions and magic are all primitive expressions of man's innate rationality. In other words, if there is anything constant in human nature, it is not to believe, but it is man's rationality, his reasoning capacity, which urges him to find reasonable explanations of everything.

And this is not even a particular characteristic which emerged with the human species. This rationality is a continuation of the entire determined process of biological evolution, which takes place on the background of the law-governed physical Universe. Human rationality is only an expression of reason in nature. Reason is nothing mysterious. The roots of reasons can be traced in the lifeless physical nature, and it is nothing more mysterious than the coherence of physical existence, the consistent coherence of biological and psychological and of the whole of existence. Religion itself, which is supposed to be the evidence for the dictum that human nature is to believe, was created by man's

desire to explain the physical phenomena which surrounded him, and on which depended his whole existence.

For the sheer exigencies of his existence, man had to know and understand how these phenomena happened, so that, if he could not yet dream of controlling them, at least he could anticipate them and guard himself against the danger of being destroyed by their impact overtaking him unawares.

The desire to find some law, some regularity, some coherence in apparently unconnected phenomena led primitive man to assume super-natural directing forces behind the natural phenomena. Ultimately, these assumed forces came to be known as so many gods of Natural Religion. But the postulation of super-natural forces behind natural phenomena was nothing more than a primitive scientific hypothesis. Even today science explains some yet insufficiently known natural phenomena on the basis of certain hypotheses. Only, the hypotheses of today are set up on the strength of previous knowledge. In the beginning of the process, primitive men had to make their hypotheses more or less arbitrarily, because the store of human knowledge at their disposal was limited. Yet, the notion that every physical phenomenon has some coherence in it was the result of previously established human experience. Men had observed through the ages that the sun rises every day in the east and sets in the west; rain falls in certain parts of the year but not at other times. There is the periodicity of day and night. Observation of all this regularity and order in natural phenomena led man to believe that they were caused by some will or dispensation, and were not simply and arbitrarily happening in a series of chaotic accidents. Thus, the belief in a cause of every natural phenomenon was expressed in primitive man populating the entire Universe with a galaxy of gods. And these gods were made in the image of man; they were magnified men, the ideal of man. It was thought that some men with greater power than those on earth made the rain and caused day and night and the seasons to happen with their clock-like, law-governed regularity and orderliness. This is a proof that even religion originally was the expression of the primitive rationality of man. The desire to know, to explain, is precedent to the tendency to believe. Belief results from inability to know. But as the store of human knowledge increased, the ratio between

the tendency to believe and the desire to know was, in course of time, reversed. Modern man is more inclined to be rational and to search for more knowledge than to seek solace in blind belief.

But modernity is not a chronological concept only. Central Africa is also living in the 20th century just as America. But all men cannot be called modern simply because they are living in the 20th century. Some may be living physically in the 20th century, but culturally perhaps in a prehistoric age. If we make this differentiation, it will be found that the primitive phase of belief is still widely prevalent. And because most people in India are still living in that stage, the dictum that human nature is to believe appears to have a greater force here than in most other countries of the modern world where scientific knowledge has become more widely disseminated. But it would not be scientific to deduce from the undeniable fact that the average Indian peasant is religiously inclined—in fact, religion for him is nothing spiritual, but sheer old inherited prejudice—that he is therefore the representative of mankind as a whole, and more spiritual than the rest, as is so often claimed by Indian nationalists.

The starting point of New Humanism is to discard the old dictum that human nature is to believe, and to assert instead, on the authority of scientific knowledge and of history, that human nature is essentially rational. Man naturally wants to know and to explain, and from this point of departure the conclusion is reached that human nature can evolve, can be changed. In an atmosphere of ignorance, it was human nature to seek the comfort of believing. In an atmosphere of scientific spirit, it is human nature to seek to know more. So, human nature has changed, and will change with increasing knowledge. And this continuous change of human nature is the manifestation of the unfoldment of the human personality.

This point of departure, that human nature is rational, that every man is endowed with the capacity to know and the urge to know, simplifies the problem of humanist social practice. The idea which today may appear to be utopian and abstract, will be appreciated by a growing number of men and women as soon as, instead of appealing to their emotions and pandering to their prejudices, instead of taking for granted that it is their nature to believe, we shall appeal to their reason, and help them to know

more and more. In proportion as they are helped to broaden their minds and the frontiers of their knowledge, the capacity of a larger and larger number of men and women to appreciate the principles of New Humanism will grow and its practice cease to be a baffling problem.

Another specific feature of the philosophy of New Humanism is its approach to the problems of ethics and morality. The moral crisis and the moral degeneration of the modern world are widely recognised and deplored. Evidently, unless there will be a development towards a higher form of social conscience in a growing number of men and women, modern mankind may not be able to survive the present crisis. Until now, the sense of morality, the appreciation of ethical values, has been associated with the assumption that it is human nature to believe. Morality was traced back to certain inexplicable, unanalysable factors like intuition, instinct, the subconscious of psycho-analysis, or the *elan vital* of the philosophy of Bergson and several other notions which all boil down to the same fallacious conclusion that man cannot be moral by himself.

According to all of them, ordinary men and women can be moral only under spiritual or temporal compulsion. The moral conscience must be derived from something super-human. Morality is linked up with religion and remains so, by and large, even today. As long as this conception prevails, it will not be possible to put man to the test of being moral on his own strength; in fact, we should have to admit that a moral regeneration is possible only by preventing the spread of knowledge amongst human beings; because the spread of knowledge will destroy faith, and if morality is conditional on the faith in something super-human, the expansion of knowledge will mean by implication the destruction of morality. Thus, instead of helping the world to overcome the moral crisis, we should plunge it into an ever deeper moral crisis.

There are modern moral philosophers who would not go to the extent of regarding anthropomorphic religion, or any fundamentalist religion, as the basis of morality, but nevertheless mystify the basis of morality. All these elementary biological notions like instinct and intuition, which are now so freely used but not well defined, cannot be explained because it is maintained that their

origin transcends the biological man, and consequently are not within the realm of human understanding. Hence, the moral urge must come from some super-human, metaphysical, supernatural source ; whether man is moral or immoral does not depend on his own urge, which he could cultivate, but depends on something that may come to him or not, so that only the fortunate, the chosen of God, or a man who has committed less sin than others, may feel the moral urge and be good, whereas, the others may not. Thus, the Christian doctrine of Original Sin haunts mankind in many forms and man will never get out of this vicious circle unless he can be moral on his own, because his will and his reason make him behave as a moral being.

Ever since the human mind dared to know things by discarding the conception of super-natural forces openly, the problem of a secular morality has confronted all thinkers. It is one of the foremost problems of our time. But until now, modern philosophers, however much perturbed by the present moral crisis, have not been able to expound a secular ethics. On the contrary many of them tend to fall back upon the appeal to religious sanction and mystic origins, with highly sophisticated arguments.

New Humanism breaks new ground there also. It boldly says that, since man is rational, he can also be moral, by himself. This is not altogether a new discovery, just as Humanism as such is not new. Epicuros already said that he denied the existence of gods because he wanted to be truthful, virtuous and kind, simply because it gave him pleasure to be so and not in obedience to someone else.

Is it possible for men to be virtuous, not under any spiritual penal code, but on his own strength ? In other words, is morality an innate human attribute ? Morality in the last analysis is the ability to judge what will be the correct response to a given situation. Judgment is obviously guided by reason. Therefore, a rational man, a man who is consciously rational, who regards reason not as something extraneous, but as part of his biological being, can declare that he is moral because by his rational thinking he behaves in a particular way and not in any other way.

Now, to spread this approach to the moral problem, to show the possibility of a secular ethics, is the second item of the practice of New Humanism, the first being to make people conscious that

it is in their nature to enquire and to know and not to believe in anything higher than man. That outlook alone will give them self-respect and confidence. Man is naturally rational but most men do not know that they are. Yet they are capable of being actually rational; because they are potentially rational, and they are so because of the fact that man arises out of the background of the physical Universe, which is a harmonious law-governed cosmos. Therefore man's thinking process, man's emotions and feelings must also be guided and informed by certain laws. Most of us are not conscious of this, but since those processes are operating in us, we can be conscious of it. Therefore, we say that man is essentially rational. And therefore a rational ethics is possible. In fact, the consciously moral behaviour of man must result from his rational thinking. That is the basis of a secular ethics.

These principles enable New Humanism to offer a social philosophy with which the modern world can overcome the present crisis. But this approach suggests, or implies, an entirely new procedure of social change. Until now efforts have been made to create institutions which would educate men, which would create conditions for man to be good or prosperous or happy or whatever change was aimed at. But the approach of a humanist philosophy starts from the individual. It says that only moral men can constitute a moral society. Only rational men can constitute a rational society. If men could not be moral under spiritual compulsion, under the compulsion of scriptural laws, they can even less be moral under the threat of secular laws. Both scriptural and criminal laws have been ruling the world for ages; but crime has not ceased, and morality is almost at a discount. It is generally admitted that laws cannot make men moral. And it is an experience of history that religion also cannot make men moral. Man cannot be moral unless to be moral is inherent in himself, unless the urge for moral responsibility is natural and essential in man himself.

New Humanism says that the desire to be moral is inherent in man, and it is so because this desire results from man's innate rationality. New Humanism does not admit that certain men are inherently superior to other men; that some are gifted with the ability of acquiring knowledge and virtue, and others must

always remain lowly and mean, in blissful ignorance, and forever be guided by their fortunate betters. Since Humanism starts from the fundamental principle that every human being is essentially rational and therefore potentially moral, the corollary is that every man is capable of knowing, as well as of behaving morally, if he is given the opportunity of developing his personality. That is the central problem of the practice of New Humanism.

Most social philosophies in our time maintain that, unless the social atmosphere is changed, human nature cannot change. But if some individual conceived the necessity of changing the social atmosphere, that philosophy is disproved, because their nature must have changed. Now if the nature of a few hundred members of a particular party can change, why should we assume that the nature of other people cannot change until that particular party comes to power and regiments the whole of society so as to shape it according to its particular ideas?

The idea of an élite, the notion of supermen, if not of a Super-Man, which were considered to be reactionary principles of Fascism, have in a curious manner crept into revolutionary social philosophies. They propound that there are some people, who, either by virtue of being born in a particular country or as members of a particular class, are fit to belong to an élite; they further hold that under the given conditions human nature cannot change, but there are some chosen few whose nature *can* change, and they will create conditions so that the nature of the others may also change some time later, in course of time.

New Humanism rejects this obviously fallacious proposition. It maintains that, since a small group of men, or a few individuals, can act rationally and behave morally and feel the necessity of creating a generally rational and moral atmosphere, it is possible that other men and women, as individuals, can also share that feeling. It is not necessary for us to wait until the kingdom of heaven comes on earth, but we can by our own efforts begin here and now creating the kingdom of man on earth.

A Radical Humanist begins from himself. I do not know how long it will take to change the world by capturing power and then creating a moral society. Besides, all revolutionaries may not believe in creating a moral society. And how do I

know whether, in power, I myself might not also be corrupted? Therefore, the shortest way of changing society will be to change myself and become a moral human being. If I succeed, I shall have the confidence that others can and will do the same.

This attitude follows from the principle of humanist practice that example is better than precept. The individual being the starting point of New Humanism, its practice must necessarily start from the actions and behaviour of individuals. A number of individuals who feel the necessity of a world populated with rational and moral beings will begin by themselves becoming moral and rational individuals. Naturally, when a hundred of them will be guided by the same ideal and will be engaged in the same practice, there will be co-operation among them. A humanist movement will develop among such groups of Humanists. They will not entertain and pursue a distant ideal of a better society, but they will create, and constitute by themselves, the epitome of the rational and ethical society that New Humanism visualises.

The revolutionary philosophers of our time have discarded Idealism. But curiously enough, they are the worst idealists. The ideal society, according to them, is a distinct thing; the new social order of equality and justice belongs to a more or less remote future determined by a variety of factors and forces. They themselves can be only instruments; and through the instrumentality of these prophets of the new ideal, first, a preliminary new order should be created; then, that political order will impose certain structural changes on society by dictatorial means all in the name of the ultimate ideal. As this process necessarily leads to the obstruction of the development of the human personality, and hence of human freedom, of the freedom of action and even the freedom of thought, it defeats its own end and can never lead to freedom. There is a contradiction between means and ends. We are now living the means; some day the end will be attained. But the means become interminable, and bad means are justified by the dictum that ends justify means. Consequently, by pursuing the ideal of a good society with dubious means which perpetuate themselves, we end by creating a bad society.

That has been the experience of the contemporary world. New Humanism, being a materialist philosophy, decidedly rejects

this faulty idealist point of view. With New Humanism, there is a unity of means and ends. There is no difference between means and ends. We are creating something not to happen, perhaps, in a distant future, but here and now. People may say that it will be a long process until this method will lead to a new social order—this process of spreading knowledge and education. They want a shortcut. They do not see how some individuals can undertake the task of educating a mass of four-hundred million people; they say only governments can undertake that task. But government education is invariably a form of intellectual regimentation. At least it does not help the growth of human individuality. It standardises human individuals. It teaches individuals to be neat cogs to fit in the wheels of a gigantic social and political machine. That kind of education may even include scientific knowledge and technology. But it is not the kind of education which will make men spiritually free and fit for government of the people by the people. Only individuals or groups of individuals can start the process of spreading education as a precondition for a radical, humanist democracy.

Humanist education will not be indoctrination or regimentation because Humanists do not utilise the masses of people as instruments for making a revolution, which would place a small group of people or a party in power. If the masses are regarded as what they are, namely individual men and women, endowed with the same potentialities that I possess myself, then it should be possible to make them think and feel just as I do, and react in the same rational and moral manner that I endeavour to attain for myself. Increase the number of people who will not only dream of a better society, but immediately apply themselves to the task of living a better society, and you will be creating it in our own very midst, from where it will spread by virtue of being better and more reasonable.

Although logically this work has to be initiated by pioneers individually, yet, because of the hopelessness of the situation, because of the failure of all other social philosophies to show a way out of this wilderness, even a few active humanist pioneers in the beginning can achieve much, because there are innumerable sensitive and sensible men and women who are baffled by the problems, who have lost all faith in conventional political action,

and to them these ideas will have a tremendous appeal because they place before them not a distant ideal, but enable them actually to create themselves the epitome of the future society of their dream, create it in their own lives and their own immediate environments.

The example of the lives of such individuals will spread, and for the first time the Marxian concept of a new society actually growing up in the womb of the old will truly be realised. Karl Marx said that socialist society would grow in the womb of the capitalist order. But it has not done so until now. Capitalism of the classic type being a thing of the past, the idea of Socialism is still only a distant goal, even in that part of the world where professed Marxists are in power. But New Humanism gives content to this prophesy of Karl Marx; within the framework of the old system which is crumbling down, pioneers of freedom can begin actually building a new society. In the beginning only in a few places nuclei of a new type of society may emerge. But in proportion as these grow, the process of the breakdown, or rather of the supplanting, of the old order will be accelerated. The new society will emerge as a consequence of a dynamic process, not of a cataclysm which takes place at a given point of time, but almost imperceptibly over a period of time, until the whole atmosphere is changed without anybody knowing just when and how it happened.

This approach to the ideal of social revolution has become all the more necessary because of the fact that the old pattern of revolution has become impossible. Invariably, the old pattern of revolution leads to counter-revolution. Therefore, unless we find a new way of revolution, there will be no revolution at all, and humanity would appear to be doomed to destruction and degeneration.

New Humanism offers a ray of hope in this deadly atmosphere of frustration and hopelessness. It is a ray of hope because it tells every man and woman that he or she can do something, that they can be strong without having to merge and lose themselves into masses.

The practice of New Humanism is therefore the only practical method of social revolution in our time, a revolution which can lead to greater freedom and justice and which will create

conditions for new patterns of a higher culture. That society can be created now, its actual foundation can be laid and the building process start, by the only possible revolutionary method in our time, the method of humanist practice.

Experience will teach what should be the forms in which the new Humanist ideas can best be presented, so that less fortunate people can grasp them more easily. It is a challenge to the initiative and imagination of the pioneers, to initiate social change by this new method of an integral Humanism. The movement will attract rational men and women who want to improve the public life of their cities, towns and villages, and, spreading from there, of the country as a whole. It is in the smaller circle of your own individual lives and environments and, spreading out from there, in your professional offices and chambers, and thence in your town and district, that the future rational and moral society will begin to grow, and once the process has started, it will be sufficiently attractive to give increasing impetus to its spread on an ever widening scale and with an ever accelerating tempo.

CHAPTER XIV

NEW APPROACH TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS*

There is widespread discontent throughout the country with the political as well as the economic conditions. As the economic conditions affect the daily lives of all more immediately, attention is concentrated on the evils in that sphere of public life. But the problem of political democracy is closely associated with the economic life of a country.

The process of building up new political institutions in free India has hardly begun. People had been made to expect that, after India would be free from foreign domination, a new era would dawn and all the evils of which the Indian people have been suffering for so long would disappear. There was really no ground for such high optimism, because big changes do not happen from today to tomorrow ; or if they do, it is by way of an imposition from above, which is not freedom.

The democratic reconstruction of the economic life of a country as vast as India cannot happen in this way. If it were only that sufficient progress was not being made, one could plead for patience. But unfortunately, the economic condition of large sections of people is going from bad to worse. That naturally causes anxiety and a sense of insecurity in the public mind. And this anxiety, in its turn, tends to preclude an objective and sober approach to the existing problems.

It would be wrong to encourage the tendency of always finding fault with others, of grumbling, dissatisfaction, frustration and hopelessness. In such an atmosphere, public life becomes demoralised, and any attempts to do at least the best possible get foiled. It is quite natural for people who have always been accustomed to look up to authority, to find fault and express dissatisfaction with those at the helm of affairs when they have promised so much, and to be against everything connected with government, has been a patriotic virtue for generations. I hold no brief for them. We must examine the situation objectively to find a way out, and for that it will not do simply to blame

* Lecture at Patna University, 1949.

somebody else always. It is quite possible that the problems are not being solved because they are being tackled with a wrong approach, in spite of best intentions. Perhaps the methods which are being adopted are not suitable to the conditions of our country, even though they may have had good results elsewhere in the world, at other times.

There are two opposing sets of ideas about changing the economic conditions of the country with the purpose of raising the standard of living of the people. But in the well-intentioned proclamations from both sides, one crucial fact is usually being ignored : The fundamental problem of Indian economy is not an economic problem properly ; it is the problem of population. The rapid rate at which the Indian population is growing is bound to make all economic problems more complicated. If we persist in finding a solution for the economic problems in either of the old ways, which were conceived in conditions where the population problem was not so acute or non-existent, we shall not succeed.

Although there are two methods advocated, and hotly disputed, for improving the economic conditions in a backward country, both postulate rapid industrialisation through the application of modern science and technology to the process of production. Both maintain that the cause of India's poverty is her industrial backwardness, and unless modern industries are built up in the shortest time, the standard of living in India cannot be raised. One of the methods advocated for the purpose is the old capitalist mode of production, leaving it to private initiative and capital to bring about the desired state of affairs. As against this, there is the point of view pressed by various shades of socialist and communist opinion. These two latter have differences as regards the policies and methods of coming to power, which is a precondition postulated by all, but their economic programmes are essentially the same. They maintain that private property is the cause of all evil and that common ownership and nationalisation of land as well as the other means of production must be the starting point of any reconstruction beneficial for the masses of the people. There are different variations of both the brands of leftism, and emphasis may be laid on different points by some of them. But these broad outlines on the whole exhaust

the Marxist-leftist remedies for curing all economic ills.

Driven by the experience that these methods have failed elsewhere, and are therefore not likely to achieve their objects in India either, further explorations for new methods must start from the experience of the world at large since Marx, examine how they have worked in other countries, and then see if they can be applied in the peculiar conditions of India. The method of concentrating on rapid industrialisation by building up heavy industries as a means to raise the standard of living of the people is obviously not suitable to India. The main consideration in favour of this method is that, unless labour is shifted from the land to fields of production where the productivity of labour is higher, national wealth cannot grow; and unless the total national wealth grows and grows quickly, its equitable distribution will not substantially alter the prevailing economic conditions. Before advocating the method of rapid industrialisation, we shall have to see if it will produce the desired result.

If it was possible to industrialise India by the methods through which Europe was industrialised in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, perhaps it might be a good thing to go through this stage, may be with suitable adaptations. But in those days industries existed on a smaller scale. Technology had not yet developed to such a high degree, and consequently a very large volume of labour had to be withdrawn from agriculture, causing a substantial redistribution of labour power in those countries. To-day, if India builds industries on the model of eighteenth century Europe, she will go down in the world competition which all industries have to face nowadays, because all the other countries have adopted the most modern techniques and they could compete with great success, not only in the world market, but even in India. Because, if goods produced in other countries can be sold cheaper in India than goods produced in India herself, the poverty of the people will compel them to buy the cheaper goods, however, patriotic they may be, and no country can live behind tariff walls forever. Therefore, the industrialisation of India would have to be on the most up-to-date pattern, and that is actually the plan of the advocates of economic reconstruction by rapid large-scale industrialisation, whether on capitalist or socialist lines.

A little knowledge of the structure of modern industry shows that even if India would be industrialised to the greatest possible extent within the next ten or fifteen years, not more than perhaps ten million people could be shifted from agriculture to industry. That will be less than a flea-bite considering the degree of population pressure on the land. That much shift of labour will have no substantial influence in changing the structure of Indian economy, not to mention the standard of living of the Indian people. If it is maintained that the living standards would at least be a little improved by comparison, there are other considerations which could be held against that contention. The obvious difficulty will be that, once modern industries are built and begin producing goods on a large scale, India will experience the curious problem of over-production while people continue to suffer from chronic under-consumption. And again, that will be so whether under capitalism or socialism, as they are known from contemporary practice.

Capitalism produces goods not with the primary consideration of supplying the needs of the people, but of selling them at a profit. When goods cannot be sold with sufficient profit, capitalists will curtail production. We have had this experience with the sugar industry in this country, where sugar mills close down and cane prices go down, although people never get enough sugar to eat. Industries can succeed only on the basis of a home market. A healthy export trade begins only when the home market is satisfied. The restriction on the development of Indian industry in the past was not merely political, as we have been told, but the real cause was that the purchasing power of the Indian people was so very limited. The removal of the foreign rule has not changed this basic condition.

In modern times, when countries are industrialised without any reference to the needs and purchasing capacity of the people, a way out is found in subsidising export trade. That is how Japan became a Great Power. There are many leading experts in our country who would take Japan as the model for Indian development. It is argued that Japan has gone out of the market, Britain is in difficulties, and therefore India can now step in their shoes and supply the entire Asian market and to some extent the African market also. But the difficulty is that other economic

powers have already arisen, and Japan is rising again. And all these powers have certain advantages over India. Therefore, India cannot succeed in this plan without heavy government subsidies. Government can produce the finance for subsidies only by taxing the people, which means lowering their standard of living even more. Thus, we may have a prosperous export trade, but an even poorer standard of living of the people.

To produce for the restricted home market is not an attractive proposition for Indian private capital. It promises small profits and involves risks. While some advocate government financing, others clamour for foreign capital investments, as a way out. It is true that India is a poor country. But it is not true that India does not possess enough resources to undertake industrialisation on a useful scale. With the resources she has, a modest beginning can be made, and it is by no means certain that a very high degree of industrialisation would be at all good for India. On the other hand, small-scale industries are of little interest to big capitalists, but they can be started by the people themselves on a local scale.

Indian industrialists are clever enough to realise that, if they put their money in big industries, they would be very soon confronted with an abnormal and paradoxical over-production. They may also surmise that by that time there might be a different government, not so sympathetic to the commercial and industrial interests. Therefore, our industrial leaders have developed the theory that India has not enough capital resources, that capital must be borrowed from outside, and that means, from America, which has most of the world's surplus finance. The result would be that America acquires a stake in our country. Thus, on the one hand, in association with American capital, which today dominates the world markets, India might get a share in world trade; and on the other, if America invests a large amount of money in India, there would have to be guarantees against dangerous political changes implying encroachments on private capital investments.

The leaders of our country, and fortunately the Prime Minister also, are quite aware of the possible political strings which can be attached to foreign capital. Because of their politically reserved attitude, American capital is not coming

fourth so easily as had been hoped, and hence industrialisation is making little headway so far. But things will not improve if we simply stand and watch and complain that nothing happens. Since all the conventional ways appear to be closed to us, we must think of other possible ways by which the economic conditions of the country can be improved.

The popular remedies offered by the leftist parties will not serve the purpose. When a country has still to build industries, their nationalisation is evidently a premature proposition. Socialism was conceived as a way out of the crisis of capitalism in advanced societies with a high degree of industrialisation and a mature working class. That is a very different matter from building up new industries in backward countries where the workers are still half peasants. Socialism today would mean a more or less equal distribution of poverty. Therefore, the main plank in the economic programme of the leftist parties has very little in common with the scientific Socialism evolved by Karl Marx under entirely different circumstances.

If we want to modernise and reorganise Indian economy and increase national wealth, we must naturally begin with the main sector of Indian economy, which is agriculture. Again, the type of reorganisation of agriculture which is necessary and possible in our country has nothing in common with Socialism. The abolition of landlordism is a feature of historically earlier revolutions. And it is yet to be seen whether the abolition of the zamindari system by itself will really have the miraculous effect hoped for. In some Indian States, this method has been adopted and laws passed to that effect. The system as such was doomed anyhow. But will its abolition by law alone improve the conditions of the peasants?

In view of the structure of Indian agriculture and the budget of the peasants, the answer to these questions cannot be in the affirmative. It is easy to thunder from the platforms against feudalism. But it is difficult to prove that, once feudalism is formally abolished, the peasants will be better off. Instead of paying rent to the landlord, they will now pay it in form of tax to the government, and in some cases the government is even planning to increase this rent or tax, so that the abolition of feudalism may immediately mean an additional burden on the

peasantry.

This is no plea for the zamindari system. But economic problems must be approached in the first line from a purely economic point of view, without preconceived ideas and with no political preoccupation. The main cause of the poverty of our peasantry is the low level of agricultural productivity due to the fragmentation of land into uneconomic holdings and the absence of an active urge on the part of the peasants to improve their position by greater effort and enterprise. Such a problem, which has its roots deep in the social soil of the country, cannot be solved by merely passing laws. The primary and perhaps the only condition for improving the condition of the peasantry is to change the methods of production and of rural economy as a whole.

The major consideration is that, even if industrialisation took place very rapidly, the pressure of population on the land would be reduced only very little. The vast majority of labour of the country will still be employed in agriculture. Modernisation of agriculture is the greatest need of the economic life of our country if production of wealth is to be increased. But this is more a matter of organisation of rural economy than of mechanisation, which is widely believed to be the only panacea. In the past, very largely for political considerations, it was held as an article of faith that an agrarian country is bound to be poor, and in order to get rid of the evils of poverty, the country must be industrialised and agriculture mechanised. Unfortunately, that obsession is still persisting and prevents us from making a fresh, realistic and unprejudiced approach to our problems.

Even America was a predominantly agricultural country until fifty years ago, and even today the value of American agricultural production is no less than that of its industrial production. To produce food for the people is the most elementary human activity. The reorganisation and development of agriculture as the foundation of a healthy rational modern economy stands a greater chance than any other method to succeed in removing the poverty of the Indian people. The experience of all attempts to the contrary is gradually compelling thinking people to reconsider their preconceived ideas about the economic reorgani-

sation of the country, and to see that, before producing industrial goods, we must be sure of a market, and we cannot have a market unless we improve the condition of the agriculturists.

The improvement of Indian agriculture presents us with a new problem. Apart from the dogma of nationalisation, we have the old theory that in order to increase the productivity of land, agriculture must be mechanised : the plough must be replaced by the tractor and other machinery. But here again we come up against the poverty of the peasants. Few of them can afford a tractor, and to employ machinery profitably, agricultural holdings must be very large. The average holding of the Indian peasant is so small that the application of machinery is almost out of question. Therefore, it is argued that agriculture must be abolished in favour of large farms owned by the State, or perhaps formally owned by peasant co-operatives, so that big machinery can be introduced.

Leaving aside the question whether this can be done by democratic means, and even whether it is at all suitable for Indian soil and other conditions, how will you then solve the problem of the displacement of labour? With big machinery, agricultural production can be carried on with perhaps less than ten p.c. of the labour now employed on the land, and not even the most rapid industrialisation with modern technology can absorb even a fraction of the vast army of unemployed which we would then have on our hand. Thus, instead of solving the problem of improving the lot of the rural population, you would only aggravate it.

These are the facts and realities of the Indian situation, which must be faced in order to find a solution, and as this is a novel situation, we must have a fresh approach to the problem which will be more suitable to the conditions of our country. The first consideration is to meet the primary needs of the people. These are food, shelter and clothing. The primary purpose of economic development is to supply these primary needs of the people. It is obvious that for this purpose the first condition is by no means the building of steel mills or chemical factories. Nor is it necessary immediately to introduce mechanical means of agricultural production. This had to be done in new countries with vast uncultivated tracts of land and inadequate labour power. There,

machines had actually to be invented to bring virgin land under cultivation, and thereby increase the food production of the world.

In India, that necessity is not there. There is more than enough labour to produce food for the people. If this labour could be employed in a more rational manner, agricultural production could be considerably increased without having to think of industrialisation in a big way. What are the main handicaps of our agriculture? Firstly, lack of irrigation. Our agriculture depends entirely on rain fall, and through a wrong forest policy over many years even that rain fall, inadequate in most seasons at the best of times, has been reduced. An improved irrigation system is probably our first need, and it can be met by providing innumerable wells, water reservoirs and local canals, bunding etc.

Secondly, the fertility of the land needs to be maintained and increased. The productivity of land falls very low when small plots are cultivated without rotation, and when the natural fertiliser of the cattle dung is being wasted for fuel; that fertiliser has to be given back to the earth, which will be possible and much better than chemical fertilisers produced in big factories. It has been calculated that the artificial fertiliser thus produced will cost much more than the peasant can afford. But at the same time it is being ignored that India has the largest supply of natural manure from its enormous cattle population. This problem can be tackled. The villagers burn the cow-dung because they need fuel. But there is plenty of coal in several parts of the country. The government can certainly see to it that coal is made accessible to the villagers. And when coal is available, a little education will convince the peasants that by putting the cow dung back into the land they will increase their income by more than the coal will cost them. This will at the same time promote one of India's natural industries, namely, coal mining.

Thirdly, the countryside needs many new roads and improvement and repairs of existing ones; also rural consumers and subsidiary industries can be organised on a small local scale on co-operative basis to provide the unemployed and under-employed villagers with useful occupation and income. For these, very

little capital is required, which can be partly raised from the local population and partly financed by co-operative credit organisations which should be helped by the government. That would cost the government much less and involve less risk, and give much more immediate benefit to the people, than vast projects which may change the face of the country without effecting any change in its economic system and living standards.

With such measures, much more can be done for immediate economic improvement than by those overcapitalised huge projects which cost too much and must therefore charge too much for their services, once these will at long last become available. If disinterested public workers will take the initiative, small scale local projects could easily be undertaken by the local people themselves with relative little help from the government, and that should certainly be forthcoming once a realistic start is made from below. The government is bound to prefer this method to constant dissatisfaction, complaints and demand, and encourage any such initiative of practical local self-help.

But the start has to be made from below. From the top, only big schemes can come, and these are likely to turn out to be white elephants. The peasants are apt to be suspicious; they will do what they are told to do from the top; but unless their very spirit and outlook is changed, the moment they are again left to themselves, they will let everything slide back to the traditional ways in which it has been going on before. The method of reorganisation from below, through co-operative self-help, presupposes a certain democratic spirit, the confidence that the affairs of the people can be managed by the people, in their own localities. That is how the humanist economic approach is linked up with that of building up a democratic State in India. We do not visualise an over-organised collectivist agriculture, but there should at least be provision for a minimum size of agricultural holdings. The alternative to uneconomic holdings on the one, and huge-scale collectives, on the other hand, would be co-operation between agricultural units of reasonable and manageable sizes. The peasants can easily be convinced that co-operation with others, all holding their own land, will produce great benefit and profit for all of them in many ways.

Whenever the initiative is taken by the government, experi-

ence tells that the result is not as desired. The initiative has to come from the peasants themselves, and co-operative organisation should never go to an extent beyond what they are voluntarily prepared for. Only then will their resistance be eliminated. If it can be shown to them that their problems of irrigation and fertilisers, of selling and purchasing etc., can be solved profitably by their own co-operation and initiative, they will certainly understand that, and only through such experience it is possible to extend the area of co-operation in future. By this method, the incentive for increased production through intensified and improved cultivation is preserved and even heightened. At the same time, not only the income of the peasants will be increased, but also the food problem of the whole country can be solved. And there does not seem to be any other way to increase the purchasing power of the majority of the population, and with it, our national wealth.

This new method and approach can be applied here and now, provided the young men of the country, who are ready to do such big things like overthrowing governments and establishing dictatorship, will adopt this new outlook and realise that in no other way is there any hope for them to do anything real and tangible immediately. If they will go and spread this outlook among the people and show them how it can be applied, not only will they improve their lot, but they will at the same time lay the foundation of a new democratic social and political order for the country as a whole.

India is supposed to be a democracy, having a Constitution which is considered very democratic. But what do the people know and understand of it? First of all, the Constitution is much too big and complicated for people to read it. What is needed, and what can be understood by the people, is the spread of the ideas of democracy and the desire to have a government of themselves and by themselves. They cannot even conceive of this unless they develop the urge for a democratic way of life. The prevailing backward mentality of the people is rather inclined towards authoritarianism and dictatorship. Most people who have any political ideas at all, whether of the Left or of the Right, are obsessed with notions of one kind of dictatorship or another, whether Ramraj or Soviet, or a paternal despotism under the

garb of formal democratic parliamentarism.

In India the experience of imposing democracy from above will have even worse results than elsewhere, because 90 p.c. of the electorate are illiterate, and have no sense nor experience of democratic citizenship, civil rights and responsibilities. This fact places a heavy premium on demagoguery in all elections. It is so much easier to make indiscriminate claims and promises than to educate the people. Therefore, there will be no end to promises, which the people will not be able to judge. The outer paraphernalia of democracy, the practice of formal parliamentarism, under the given conditions, will only encourage greater corruption, irresponsibility and demagoguery.

This does not mean that we should not have elections or a parliament, or that there cannot be any democracy in India. It only means that you cannot build a house by beginning to build the roof. We must first lay down the foundation of a democratic political structure. The people must first *want* a democracy and believe that it is possible. By coming together to solve our most immediate problem of increasing agricultural production in the way briefly outlined before, we can make such a beginning. Encouraged by the result of their own initiative in solving their local problems, within a very short time the eyes and minds of the people will be opened also to our new approach to a democratic political reconstruction.

Every member of the various rural co-operative institutions will be a voter. These very co-operative institutions can be the local nuclei of a democratic political structure. Having come to know each other in the working of economic co-operation, instead of voting for an outsider nominated by some political party in an election, they will easily understand that one of themselves would be a much better representative of their interests in the parliaments. Thus, through the means, and following from the experience, of economic co-operations, we can also create local political democracies, which may replace the present local self-governing institutions, now so full of corruption and devoid of any democratic significance. The whole electorate can come together in local conventions and choose a candidate from among themselves whom they know because he lives with them and has proved his worth in their co-operative institutions, and who

cannot run away with his promises once the elections are over. He will remain directly under popular influence and control, which alone will make of a formal democracy a real democracy, or as we call it, a Radical Democracy.

Thus, while laying down the foundation of a healthy economic system, which will also determine the higher economic organs of the country, you will at the same time have created the preconditions for a democratic political reconstruction of the country. In such a society, there will be no room for political practices or malpractices which make it possible today, on the pretext of being representatives of the people, for some self-willed minority to usurp the sovereignty of the people. So long as any group of politicians can usurp the people's sovereignty, democracy is not possible. Therefore, democracy has not yet succeeded anywhere in being what it was meant to be, namely, government of the people and by the people. The conventions of formal democracy have created a barrier to the emergence of a real democracy.

Seeing this experience made in more advanced countries, our own backwardness may prove to be a blessing in disguise. We have no such false conventions to overcome. We begin from scratch. The peculiar conditions of our country do not allow us to travel the beaten track. But to make good use of this blessing in disguise, we must find an entirely new approach to the whole problem of democracy, in its political operation as well as in its application to economic problems.

It is not a question of Western or Indian ways of life. The old Indian way of life was not so good that we should want to preserve it. The western way of life—not because it is western, but because it has led into a blind-alley is also no attraction. What we need is a new way of life, which is a human way of life, where the qualities of the human beings will become decisive and will be allowed to determine the system under which they will work and live.

CHAPTER XV

HUMANIST APPROACH TO ELECTIONS *

The fundamental principle of New Humanism is to revive the old idea of the sovereignty of the human individual. According to it, every political organisation or social and economic institution must be judged by its ability to help the development of the individual human personality of the people who live under those institutions. The freedom of any social system is to be judged by the actual degree of freedom that its individual members enjoy. A social philosophy which sets up any other standards to measure progress and freedom is misleading, and can be of no use to solve the crisis of our time.

During the last quarter of a century—a period exceptional in history because during that short time the world was plunged into two cataclysmic world wars and experienced other world-shaking events—political theories and social philosophies with their metaphysical sanction have been put to the acid test and failed to stand that test. This experience has led to a universal movement for a humanist revival, a movement which calls for a rebirth of man as the sovereign entity, as the measure of all things, as the root of mankind and the highest outcome of the entire history of evolution.

In order to see to what extent this humanist philosophy can be practised, we should apply the test in our own country. For a generation and more India has been struggling to gain the opportunity for internal reconstruction in a way which would promote the progress and prosperity and ensure the freedom of its inhabitants. That struggle has at last resulted in success. National independence has been attained. This is a historical event which opens a new chapter in the history of India. Having thus gained the opportunity of taking our destiny in our own hands and shaping it according to our own desire and needs, we must now see how we shall best accomplish this task imposed on us by history.

* Lecture delivered at the Town Hall of Guntur, winter 1949/50.

A Constitution of a Republic, of a parliamentary democracy, has been framed. But to frame a Constitution is easy enough. That comparative easy part of the task having been accomplished, we shall now have to see whether this Constitution can be worked in our country.

Social institutions are made by the men constituting society, whereas a Constitution can be made by a few learned individuals. But any social institution, however good and idealistic it may be conceived, is brought down to the general cultural and intellectual level of the people of a country. A democratic Constitution can be worked in an atmosphere where the democratic way of life is appreciated. A conscious will to freedom, the desire to take destiny in your own hands, a sense of responsibility and ability to judge what is good and what is wrong and to examine critically the promises and programmes put before the people by parties and politicians—these are the preconditions for a successful democracy. If we take a realistic view of the situation in our country, then we must regretfully come to the conclusion that, whatever be the letter and the spirit of our new Constitution, the prevailing atmosphere is not conducive to a democratic society.

Confronted with this situation, what are we to do? There is a simple attitude, which is actually taken up by many people, trying to make a virtue of our handicaps. According to this attitude, the intellectual backwardness and cultural stagnation, the authoritarian mentality, blind faith and hero-worship, all these various features of our national psychological make-up, are interpreted as so many indications of a special Indian Genius. It is suggested that the western way of life, including parliamentary democracy, cannot and should not be attempted on the Indian soil, and India must have a government, a State, and a social system corresponding to her special "spiritual" genius.

A little analysis will reveal the real significance of this point of view. It is this: since the cultural atmosphere and mentality of India, or at least of the large bulk of the Indian population, have not risen to the level where democratic practice is possible, since it belongs rather to the 16th if not the 15th century of world history, it is quite natural that 20th century political institutions cannot be established in that atmosphere. Therefore, it is argued,

the political institutions of by-gone days would be more suitable for India than those evolved in Europe in modern times.

In a way, that is right. But it is retrograde and reactionary to approve and glorify this deplorable state of affairs. For one reason or another, culturally and intellectually, the vast bulk of the Indian people has not progressed from the point where Europe found herself in the 15th and 16th century. Therefore, the advocates of India's "special genius" argue: don't try to introduce modern political institutions into this mediaeval atmosphere, but let us glorify mediaevalism and give India the equivalent of mediaeval institutions. This may be interpreted as love of tradition and patriotism, but it is certainly not a progressive ideal. It would take the Indian people farther away from the goal of freedom. Therefore, we shall have to see if democracy cannot after all be worked in our country, because it is the only political philosophy based on individual freedom.

A critical attitude towards democracy, doubts and scepticism about the possibility of democracy, are not confined to our country, but are widespread also in Europe. The attack on democracy began already earlier in the 20th century. Having pointed out the obvious faults and defects of parliamentary democracy, advocates of a new revolutionary social philosophy suggested dictatorship as the alternative to defective democracy. Democracy was criticised as the dictatorship of the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie. Therefore it was suggested, since parliamentary democracy is the dictatorship of one class, it should be replaced by the dictatorship of another class, and only then true democracy could be attained.

The suggestion was to replace one evil by another evil, and by some curious process of reasoning, good was expected to result from evil. But after the first World War, the cult of dictatorship was preached from yet another quarter, not from the left but from the right, and the result was the rise of Fascism, which plunged the world into a ruinous war and might have completely destroyed modern civilisation, had the war not ended in the defeat of Fascism.

Between these two schemes of dictatorship, democracy appeared discredited, and an opinion gained ground that democracy had proved to be a failure. Of course, there still exists a

large bulk of democratic opinion, and several important countries still hold on to the faith in democracy and practise it in their own way, and consequently it cannot be said that the western world has rejected democracy. But what has happened is that a large volume of opinion has come to this depressing conclusion not because they prefer dictatorship, but because they have not drawn the correct lesson from the defective practice of democracy in the last hundred years. The lesson should be not that democracy has failed, but that it has never been given a fair chance. People never had the opportunity to govern themselves. If anything has failed, it is representative government and not democracy. No taxation without representation was in its time certainly a democratic demand, but it was democracy on a primitive level, and it never rose much above it.

The lesson of this experience is that we should now try to find out if a government more directly controlled by the sovereign people is possible in our time. Obviously, there must be some government, and all the people cannot be responsible for the actual execution of governmental functions. It may be possible in some village communities, as it was done in the city states of antiquity. But in modern States, with their vast population and complicated social and economic institutions, direct participation of the whole people in the day to day administration of a big country as a whole is impossible.

This baffling problem is driving more and more people to the conclusion that democracy cannot be practised and must be supplanted by another form of government, and if it is not democracy it must be dictatorship. New Humanism offers a new approach to this problem. The approach is to renew the emphasis on individual man in society and to point out that every human being is naturally endowed with potentialities which can be developed ; and if they are freely developed in the individuals from childhood, then an increasingly large number of the citizens of any country will be able to judge for themselves in all matters concerning their government and discriminate between propositions placed before them. Consequently, the present atmosphere in which politicians and parties can sway people with big claims and promises will be changed and a different atmosphere created in which the citizens are capable of forming clear opinions on

what they want and what is to be done, and how it can be done. There remains then only to provide the channels for the intelligent and responsible opinion of citizens to become effective.

Democracy recognises the sovereignty of the people, but no opportunity is provided to the sovereign people to exercise their sovereignty. The only choice granted to the sovereign people is to surrender their sovereignty to one or the other political party, and then they are ruled by this or that party on behalf of themselves, so to say, but it is the party which rules and the people have no say and no control in the matter until they may surrender their sovereignty in the next elections to some other party. Once a representative is elected, he is no longer under the control of his electors but that of his party. Party discipline is binding on every member of a party, and the party whip is the last appeal to his judgment. A member of a particular constituency may feel morally obliged to do certain things for the welfare of his electors, but as a member of his political party, he is guided by the party whip which may as often as not prevent him from doing what he feels morally obliged to do.

Therefore we find in most cases that popular representatives do not represent the people, but their own party. You may have noticed that during the debate on the Constitution in the Constituent Assembly, many members advocated in the beginning a point of view of their own which they suddenly abandoned simply because the party whip had cracked, and they voted against their conscience. To change this system, obviously, we have to find a way by which the popular representatives will remain constantly and at all times under the control of the people. They should always express the will of the people, always represent the aspirations and needs of their electors. But that cannot be done unless the representative is free from this conflict of loyalties between the people and the party. So long as the sovereign people remain steeped in a psychological, intellectual and cultural atmosphere in which they can be easily swept off their feet, in which they lose their ability to discriminate and to judge intelligently, the people's representatives do not have to fear that the people who elected them once may not elect them again. But as soon as that atmosphere changes, as soon as the electors will be able to hold their representatives responsible for

what they do, then the would-be parliamentarian will feel that party loyalty is not enough for them to be re-elected by the people, and that he will have to represent more faithfully the intelligent will of the people if he wants to get the vote of the people of his constituency more than once.

There we come to the root of the problem. We shall have to remind ourselves again that without education democracy is not possible. Education is not merely meant to signify the ability to read and write. We know of people holding science degrees practising all sorts of religious rituals and behaving in a most unenlightened manner. Education for democracy means development of the natural distinctive attributes of all human individuals, development of the innate ability to think for oneself, to judge oneself and decide for oneself what is right and wrong. Even the attempt to change the atmosphere in that respect cannot be made unless our point of departure is the recognition of the fact that every human being is potentially rational, and therefore potentially moral; every man is born as good as the other, and with the same potentialities. That idea is denied in formal democracy, under merely representative government, as much as under dictatorial regimes. Both believe in prerogatives given by God, or by birth or by environment; in any case, given by an extraneous agency to some and not to others. This presupposes the view that there is no human equality on principle: some are born inferior to others, and those born superior, endowed with abilities not to be found in the common man, are naturally destined to be the rulers of a country; that is, they alone can conduct the affairs of society in all its departments, on all levels.

New Humanism challenges this underlying idea of all those political theories and suggests that, if we are to come out of the present crisis, if democracy is ever to become a reality, if freedom is to be more than fraud or fiction, then we must begin from the fact indicated by modern scientific knowledge, that every man is endowed with basically identical potentialities which can be developed. The foundation of a free society will be laid by helping every single individual in society to develop his or her human potentialities.

As far as this, many are prepared to agree. But then the practical difficulties will be pointed out. This may be a *bona fide*

doubt. But I am afraid, subconsciously, this question is again inspired by the doubt about the controversial equality of men. Unless we discard the old belief that men are born to be unequal, this question is bound to arise. What may be legitimately said is that everybody is potentially equal, but how long will it take to unfold the potentialities? The answer is: assuming that it will take a long time—what is the alternative? We have travelled the other way so long, and where has it led us? Since that other way has proved to lead into a blind-alley and some new way has to be travelled, even if it is a long way and an uphill path, we shall have to risk that. The only way is also the shortest way.

But ultimately it will turn out not to be so much longer than others. Everything depends on accepting a simple proposition, namely, the fundamental, because biological, equality of all human beings. We first ask: Is man by nature rational and capable of thinking and enquiring? Or is his nature to believe and therefore the bulk of men must always accept and follow blindly something or somebody? Secondly, is it possible for man to be moral on his own, or can he always behave morally only under compulsion? If all members of society could behave intelligently and decently, we should have the best of societies. If the present society is so full of evil, the reason is that so few people behave intelligently and decently. They do not behave intelligently, but blindly follow something or somebody, leaders, traditions, or customs. They do not behave morally, because in the given atmosphere, moral sense has been destroyed: man's natural sense of what is decent and moral has been dulled by the generally accepted saying that ends justify means. And this has been said so often that it has become one of those traditions and habits which are blindly followed. This is true both in personal and, even more, in public life.

Public life in the political field is dominated by political parties. Their main object is to capture power, because it is believed that nothing can be done except by governments in power. If the best of programmes is ever to be realised, the first need is power. Once it is taken for granted that capture of power, by whatever methods, is the precondition of any good to be achieved, and without power nothing can be done, the logical

conclusion is that anything and everything done for capturing political power is justifiable. Once popular mentality is dominated by the principle that anything done for a good end is right, morality disappears, and that is the main evil in the public life of all countries in the world to-day. All thinking people complain about this, and are looking for ways and means to introduce decency and morality in public life. Morality has disappeared because it is forgotten or ignored that only individuals can be moral. Morality is an attribute of men and men have been lost in the masses. If you deal with men, ultimately you can appeal to their reason and deal with their conscience. But in the mass, men's reason and conscience are also submerged and suspended. Masses respond more easily to emotional appeals, because men merge into masses on their lowest common denominator. The level of the politicians then adjusts itself to this mentality. Elections do not ensure democracy but put a premium on demagoguery.

To ensure that elections reflect an intelligent public opinion, there has to be an intelligent public opinion first. Then only elections can become an instrument of democracy not sprung on unprepared electorates in a concerted effort to sweep them off their feet. Such an alternative approach to election begins with people in their localities meeting in local or regional conferences for serious discussions, not for public harangues, but for educative and enlightening propagation of these ideas. Through such informal regular meetings an intelligent public opinion is created. Having come to understand political questions and economic problems for themselves, the people will see that they need not vote for this or that party, leaving all judgment to them and relying on their promises, but that they can judge independently and elect candidates of their own choice, from amongst themselves. These will be independent candidates; that is to say, they will not depend for their election on any political party, and therefore they can depend on their own conscience and be responsible to the people directly. That will do away with the evils of party politics and the scramble for power and its demagoguery and corruption.

In the next elections we may not yet get rid of the bad effects of party politics. But we may already help in the appearance of a considerable number of independent candidates who

in the assemblies will not be subjected to the whip of the parties, whether in power or in opposition, but who can raise the voice of the people inside the parliaments. That voice may not yet be able to influence affairs very soon in a decisive manner, but even in the first parliament elected under the new Constitution it will be possible in this way to have at least a good number of independent candidates who can think for themselves and can have the courage of their conviction because they do not depend for their seats on any party machinery.

Thus, while the big parties may fight for power among themselves, there will be a few people to express the will of the people without reservations and extraneous contingent considerations of fear or favour. Their voice, in its turn, will quicken the consciousness of the people outside who follow the proceedings in the assemblies. And what is more, after the elections, independent candidates, who depend directly on the people of their locality for their election, cannot forget their constituencies but must keep constantly in touch with them for their mandate and support. Also those Humanists who have stimulated this political awakening in the constituency will not leave the voters to relapse into apathy after elections, but constantly remind them of their rights and responsibilities. They worked in the constituency not to be elected and then go away to the centres of power, but they remain there with the sole function of educating the people and helping them establish a democratic local republic. In these local republics it is possible to have direct democracy, and their functions can be expanded as the citizens grow increasingly discriminating and conscious. In them, power and sovereignty will remain in the hands of the people themselves, and in this way the precondition for a government of the people and by the people will be created. Because ultimately the nature of the basic units will determine the structure of the whole State built upon them. A democratic State in a large country is possible only on the basis of such small organised local democracies which can remove the sense of helplessness of the individual citizens, and through which alone individual voters can exercise control over the State by means of an intelligent active public opinion. To promote this is the most effective practice of New Humanism in the political field.

But New Humanism can be practised in other aspects also. Instead of making the government or the State responsible for everything and then complain if it does not discharge its responsibility, for instance in the field of education, people who are interested in actually doing something and not only talking and demanding, or blaming somebody or other for all that is wrong, can take a similar initiative as in the political field, and through mutual co-operation start educational institutions from the primary schools to the Universities by their own means and efforts. No State educational institutions can work in a vacuum. Before the demand for general education as a responsibility of the State arose in the 18th century in the French Revolution, the preconditions for its fulfilment had been created by the intellectual movement of the Enlightenment. That movement had laid the foundation for a secular education divorced from the Church, priestly domination and the blind faith of the religious mode of thought. The lessons of that movement can still serve in countries like India to-day. It dispelled the darkness of the Middle Ages in Europe. Its ideas were not very different from what we are proposing to-day in our effort to dispel the last vestiges of the darkness and stagnation of our own dark ages, from which we are only recently emerging.

The Enlightenment movement was carried on by great scientists. Their main activity consisted in writing that monumental work, the Encyclopaedia. History has proved that if the French Revolution were to be traced to one single cause, it is this book. Through this book, Enlightenment spread to the farthest corners of France. The single biggest result of the Encyclopaedia was to destroy the prejudices and enslaving traditions of the old order, through the spread of scientific knowledge. Therefore, nobody need fear that the work of education and spread of ideas is merely theoretical or without practical value in public life and even in the political field. Other forms of political practice are necessary, but this change of outlook and atmosphere has to precede the building of any democratic institutions.

Since democratic politics thinks in terms of elections, New Humanism, if it wants to be accepted, will have to show whether it can be practised in elections also, and that is what I have tried

to show. But greater importance should be attached for the time being to the other kind of work which aims at freeing the people from spiritual bondage, which appeals to their reason and compels them to think, and which also compels them to be guided in their behaviour by their own judgment and conscience, and not by any external authority, be it in heaven or on earth. Only when people will behave morally because they are consciously relying on their rationality will man appear as what in fact he is—the highest culmination of the entire process of evolution. This moral self-reliance will express itself in all fields of human life and activities, personal as well as social. It will dispel the paralysing influence of the belief in *karma*. If people believe that their suffering is due to their *karma*, they will think it is useless to try and shape their own fate. Thus, if we bring the light of science to the people, it is not merely a matter of building schools and indulging in theories. When people will understand what science has to say about the laws of *karma*, it will have a decisive effect on the creation of that self-confidence without which democracy is not possible.

To spread enlightenment in all the dark corners of our social life, where superstitions lurk and prejudice breeds, is the most fundamental task of all. It is the precondition for any better society, particularly for a democratic society and for a higher cultural level. If authoritarian mentality is so prevalent, it is because of the cultural backwardness of the people. If we want to avoid the danger of totalitarianism, we must change that mentality of the people. That can be done only if those who are at least partially enlightened, conscious of their own responsibility to contribute to this effort. Everybody can search himself if he cannot by his own will and decision be decent, moral and rational; if he can, he will in consequence feel free himself. If you say that you cannot, I must doubt that freedom is your highest ideal. But once you say that you can, then you can also spread this certainty, this conviction and this attitude to others. Once there are a few people anywhere who have this spirit, you have founded the nucleus of a decent society in which men can be free. Once you have a hundred such nuclei, the progress of this movement will become very rapid and spread in geometrical progression.

But first you must have the conviction that it can be done. And then you must have the courage and the confidence to start doing it. If instead of only preaching and teaching, we act and live as Humanists, the practice of this New Humanism will spread more and more rapidly. Of course, before talking about practice, it is necessary that we must not only accept the ideas, but thoroughly understand them also. Otherwise, neither can we act according to them ourselves, nor carry conviction to others. When I hear somebody argue that New Humanism cannot be practised, I first ask whether he is convinced that the ideas themselves are right. Because if he is not yet convinced, no use arguing with him about practice. If you accept ideas merely because it is easy to practise them, you are much more likely to accept bad ideas than good ideas, because bad ideas are usually more easily practised. In any case, before we talk of practice, we must grasp the theory. Action presupposes thought. Unless the theory appeals to your reason, no use worrying about practising the theory. But once that theory has become part of me, of my whole mental outlook, and I am inspired by it, I must act according to it, I cannot help doing so. As long as a theory remains theory, and does not become part of my existence, there will be no action at all, at least not conscious and consistent action. But once this theory becomes a live and integral part of my existence, all my actions will be *practical expressions* of that theory.

The appeal of new Humanism is addressed to all who are dissatisfied with the given state of things, because it is they who feel the need of something new to give meaning to their lives. And if they are convinced that New Humanism offers a better and more satisfying way of life than the theories which have led to so much disillusionment and frustration, you will not hear from them this doubt about the possibility of practising the ideas which they have made their own. To say that you would agree with our ideas if you thought they could be practised, is the wrong approach. Because when we spread our ideas, we don't ask anybody to join us or to vote for us or to go out of his way to perform any particular kind of discipline or activity. We only say: if you agree with these ideas, go and act according to them. New Humanism is a way of life. If you accept it, if you make it your own way of life, you cannot help acting up to it. Life

consists in some form of activity all the time. And if you accept this way of life, it will find expression in everything that you do, in human relations, in social institutions, or political elections. That is the only way in which we can ensure that not only will India be an independent country, but the Indian people will also actually enjoy freedom. No amount of welfare and prosperity can bring happiness unless they are enjoyed in freedom.

CHAPTER XVI

DECENTRALISATION OF POWER *

The central problem of all modern democracies is that of concentration of power in the hands of the State which has increased in a phenomenal manner in the course of the last five or six decades. What is power? Power can be defined as the ability to do things. As such, power will always have a place in human society. But the usefulness of power is eclipsed by abuses when it is concentrated to such an extent that the community as a whole becomes totally powerless. Secondly, the concept of the State has also to be defined. Because, power is associated with the function of the State. Some political theoreticians of recent times have defined the State as an organ of coercion, an instrument created by a certain class or section of society with the purpose of exercising its domination over the rest. The corollary to this definition is that a just and fair social order is impossible so long as the State exists. Therefore, thinking out their thoughts consistently, these political theorists came to the conclusion that in an ideal society the State must wither away. The anarchist denial of the very necessity of the State is only an exaggerated version of what may be called the communist utopia.

The ideal of a stateless society is an obvious absurdity. The most outstanding feature of the communist-social organisation is greater and greater concentration of power, political as well as economic. It is very difficult to see how one of the two processes can ever annul the other. The establishment of a communist society presupposes a highly centralised political power. Such unrealistic utopian ideas about the future naturally result from the equally unrealistic, empirically unverifiable, doctrines that society is divided into irreconcilable classes, and the history of civilisation has been a history of class struggle.

The division of society into classes with diverse interests is a historical fact. But it is equally true that cohesive forces are also inherent in society. The centrifugal tendency is counteracted by

* Editorial in *The Radical Humanist*, dated 30th August, 1953.

a centripetal tendency. In the history of social evolution, an equilibrium between the two created stability, whereas discord and disharmony led either to the establishment of dictatorships or other autocratic forms of government, or to social disintegration.

If there was no cohesive force in society, then mankind would have continued in a state governed by the laws of the jungle. The entire history of society shows that the cohesive force has always been more or less in operation; otherwise, there could be no history of civilisation. Ancient civilisations broke down because the forces of social cohesion and harmony were overwhelmed by strong centrifugal tendencies. Mediaeval and modern history has also been punctuated from time to time by wars and revolutions. But reaching higher and higher levels of social evolution, civilisation survived those recurring vicissitudes and regained equilibrium of the conflicting forces.

It is possible to visualise an idealised State when the contradictory forces will disappear, and society be a homogenous organism. Then, there would be no classes, one trying to dominate all others. Yet, society will be there; it will not be a primitive community, but a much more complicated organisation with greatly diversified fields of activities. Such a society cannot possibly do without a central organisation. It need not be a Leviathan, as the State has been described, but only a co-ordinating factor, one of the various social institutions, the function of which will be to harmonise the functions of the various other institutions.

Primitive communities organised themselves politically much later than their original formation, primarily with the purpose of self-defence and struggle for existence. In the intervening period, progressive human development added to the original functions of society, which was departmentalised according to vocations and professions. Eventually, the State arose to co-ordinate and harmonise the diverse departments of social activities, so as to promote the welfare of the community as a whole. It was not superimposed on society, nor given any totalitarian significance. It was created as the instrument of public administration to maintain order, to make laws and enforce them, so that the diverse forms of social activities could be carried on peacefully. The State rose as one of the several other social institu-

tions, all equally autonomous—economic, educational, cultural.

There was a time when the government did not interfere in the economic life of society. The requirements of the community were met by peasants, artisans and traders, applying human labour to natural resources, either individually or organised in guilds. Individual freedom and institutional autonomy in educational and cultural fields were particularly beyond the jurisdiction of the State.

The economic advantages of the politically centralised modern society are a doubtful blessing. We can therefore visualise a time when the State will again cease to be the Leviathan which it has become today, without dreaming of the absurd utopia of a stateless society, a society without public administration. But we shall have to search for ways and means to reduce the functions of the State to the minimum; in other words, restore to the native function of an instrument for public administration, to co-ordinate the various functions of other autonomous social institutions.

There are social philosophers who advocate what is called a pluralistic society, composed of autonomous institutions, the State being one of them, with no other function than to regulate and co-ordinate their diverse activities. This view of social organisation was stated in the nineteenth century liberal dictum that that government is the best which governs the least. Since then, the tendency for concentration of power has gained ground: as a result, it is not an exaggeration to say that the State has become an engine of coercion. But the point is that it is so not because of power as such, but because of concentration of power. So, ultimately, the problem of democratic political practice is that of decentralisation. Politically, it may not be a baffling problem. It is aggravated by the centralisation of economy, immensely reinforcing the power of the State. In the last analysis, the problem, therefore, is: Can the economy of a modern society be decentralised? And in consequence thereof, also the political power? This is the problem of our time, and it will not do to blink over it by arguing that, since it has been so for centuries, how can it be otherwise? The fatalistic view that human ingenuity has been exhausted and the last word of wisdom pronounced, implies that mankind is nearly its journey's end, and that the perspective

is not promising ; it is moving towards a social breakdown. With such a negation of human potentiality to evolve, progress and create endlessly, "might is right" will not be only the legal but also the moral law. One can imagine what life will be like in a society ruled by such law, the law of the jungle.

If human freedom is not to be sacrificed in the scramble for power, we shall have to explore the possibility of political practice without the interference of political parties. Because it is through the instrumentality of political parties that power is concentrated in the hands of minorities, to be abused and misused on false pretences. The desired decentralisation of power is conditional upon the disappearance of the instrument of centralisation. It must be replaced by another instrument, which can guarantee that the sovereignty of the people will always remain with the people.

So long as political parties are believed to be essential for democratic practice, power will be inevitably concentrated in the hands of a few men. Therefore, under the party system, benevolent dictatorship is the best one can reasonably expect ; and one also may idealise benevolent dictatorship ; but the fact is that it has never existed in the world.

There are people who are above corruption. But politics as it is practised today repels them. They stay out of the scramble for power because it might corrupt even the best of men. Nevertheless, they are not necessarily unconcerned with public affairs. They try to do small things in their quiet manner, and the cumulative effect of their silent endeavour may keep the morale of society from a complete collapse. To raise politics above corruption, it must be free from the lust for power. A constitutional structure based upon an even distribution of power alone can purify politics, and such a genuine democratic system is possible if the individual is restored to his place of primacy.

Democracy has been discredited firstly because of the fallacious theory which made for deceptive practice ; and secondly, the practice did not allow that a solid foundation of the democratic State was laid. It placed a premium on demagoguery. Those who are dreaming of a better world in which politics will be free from corruption and concomitant evils, must apply themselves to the task of laying the foundation of a democratic society. Individual men and women must be conscious of their indivi-

duality, conscious of their ability to judge intelligently and discriminatingly all moral and political issues confronting them, so that in course of time politicians will not be able to sway them by appeals to base instincts and unbridled emotions, when a growing number of electors will be able to examine the promises made to them by parties at election time and find out whether they are genuine or false. They will be building democracy from the bottom. That is the proper approach to the baffling problem of democratic practice in the modern world: the problem of practising direct democracy in large States with huge populations. Genuine democracy must be direct democracy. Indirect democracy means delegation of power. And delegation of power means surrender of sovereignty. Unless the democratic State is based on the foundation, not of helpless atomised individuals, but on the foundation of a network of locally organised democracies, democracy will never be real. Decentralisation of democracy will prevent centralisation of power, and the function of the State will be reduced to coordination of the activities of the other autonomous social institutions.

This process may take a long time. That is the common objection against it. But once we make the choice and begin moving in the new direction, it is not really such a long way as it appears to be. The precondition is to discard the traditional notion of human nature, and to know that it is neither evil nor divine, but that man is essentially rational; that, given the opportunity, every human being is capable of thinking for himself, judging right and wrong, making judgements and acting accordingly. Unless by his own nature, as a biological being, man was capable of thinking rationally and behaving morally, it would be a vain dream to visualise a free, just and harmonious social order. For the time being, it is true that the common people are illiterate; they may not be able to govern country. But at the same time, is it not a fact, that left to themselves, even the most ignorant peasants can manage their affairs better than our present government? The distrust for the ability of the common people to think for themselves and take care of themselves is only a pretext for seizing power in their name and abusing that power to suppress their liberty.

At election times, all parties go to the people and make pro-

mises ; they all know that not half of their promises can be fulfilled ; but they rely on the fact that the voters cannot understand, and therefore, can be duped. Can that state of affairs not be changed ? It can be. To change this state of affairs is the first necessity, the biggest task for anybody who wishes to participate in politics—not for selfish ends. One need not go to the people only to catch their votes ; to help them cast their votes intelligently, would be an immensely more important work. The electorate should be asked to examine the programmes of all the parties, to see if the promises can be fulfilled or, if fulfilled will really improve matters. But this new political practice presupposes a radical change in the idea of human nature. It is an appeal to reason, which presupposes the belief that man is a rational being. Political practice is guided by the notion that the ordinary man cannot think for himself ; therefore he must be persuaded to follow parties and politicians. Since this unnatural relation between the people, the parties and politicians constitutes the foundation of what is called party politics, the latter prevents the people even to think for themselves. Politics is not only a scramble for power, but competition in all manner of questionable practices.

The position may appear to be a vicious circle. But there is a way out, which party politicians would not take, because that would mean the end of their days. Appeal to reason is the way out. And modern science indicates the way. Science teaches that human nature is not to believe, but to enquire, that human nature is rational. It is true that the rational nature of man has been buried very deep. But, being the essence of human nature, it can be recovered. Let some people have the conviction and the courage to act accordingly. Let them raise political practice on the level of reason and intelligence. I have no doubt the appeal to reason will find a response. The new politics will bear fruit sooner than one dares imagine ; only, the measure of success will not be power, but gradual disappearance of that evil. Even a few people can lay down a solid foundation of democracy and freedom, if they forego the quest for power, do not participate in the scramble ; do not ask for the vote of the people to rule in their name ; but, on the contrary, remind the voters of their human dignity, capacity to think and to act creatively.

Thus, the electorate will gradually become critical and discriminating ; the time will come when the voters of a locality will tell candidates of all parties to leave them alone ; amongst themselves they will find men in whom they can have confidence and who will remain responsible to them between two elections. Once that happens, the end of the party system will begin, and with the parties, the main cause for concentration of power will disappear. In the process, we shall already have laid down the foundation of a decentralised State of local republics, which will combine all functions of the State as they affect the local life. National culture, national economy and national political institutions will be cast on the pattern of the functions of these local republics ; power will remain with them, to be wielded directly by the individual members of small communities. Being thus reared upon a broad foundation of direct democracies, the State will be really democratic. Usurpation of power will be out of the question. Thus, a pluralistic modern society can be built up at the same time while doing away with centralisation of power, political and economic.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY*

The future of Democracy is of interest only for those who believe that Democracy is the best form of government so far conceived by human intelligence. There are people who hold a different view. They either do not believe that democracy is desirable or have become sceptical about its possibilities. I shall not argue with them, but start from the assumption that democracy is the best form of government. I shall speak of the future of Democracy in India ; but Democracy is threatened throughout the world ; the experience is universal. The need of a new approach to the problems of democracy is felt everywhere, and while we can learn from the experience of others, if we can find a solution, it will be of use to them too.

After a long period of struggle for political freedom, an independent sovereign State has been established in India. The fundamental law of the land is the Constitution of a parliamentary democracy. It is easy enough to write a good Constitution. A few legal minds, given the necessary idealism and knowledge of political and social matters, can produce an excellent blueprint of a State machinery. But it is extremely difficult to put a good Constitution into practice, because that depends on other factors. Until now, the easier part of the task has been accomplished ; an apparently good Constitution has been written. Now the very much more difficult task of putting it into practice will have to be tackled. In that respect, the tendency to find the way of least resistance usually prevails.

It is commonly believed that the working of a Constitution requires only an efficient government machinery and observance of certain procedures or policies which have come to be conventionally believed to be the characteristic features of a democratic régime. In the Constitution of the Indian Republic, a good deal of attention has been given to the details of the government

* Lecture delivered at the University Institute Hall, Calcutta, on February 5th, 1950.

machinery. From the point of view of constitutional theory, that is a defect. A Constitution is the fundamental law of a country. It lays down certain principles to guide the legislative branch of the State and control executive power. Certain fundamental principles are indeed laid down in the Indian Constitution, but not always unequivocally. There are obviously objectionable features, particularly as regards civil liberties. The chapter on fundamental rights is only a small part of the document, which happens to be the longest Constitution of the world. It concerns itself with details of procedure couched in a legalistic jargon not easily understood by the average citizen. The fundamental rights and other basic ideas get lost in the jumble of that jargon.

One of the devices of constitutional lawyers is to provide for checks and balances. The checks and balances are introduced to prevent the abuse of the rights granted. The importance attached to the provision of checks and balances in a Constitution to guarantee against its abuse is significant psychologically. It indicates that the Constitution-makers anticipate abuse of power. That feeling only gives expression, perhaps unconsciously, to the danger for the future of democracy in this country.

The old saying that a country gets the government it deserves has a large grain of truth in it. Under the parliamentary democratic system, a Constitution is worked by governments which are controlled by a party in power. A democratic Constitution works when the party in power is controlled by the people. The vast bulk of the population in India today is completely incapable of controlling the party which claims to represent it. Therefore, if democratic government is government of the people and by the people, an efficient government machinery and a party confessing democratic principles do not by themselves guarantee a really democratic regime.

The establishment and functioning of democracy, of a free society, in the last analysis, is conditional upon the popular mentality, which again is determined by the cultural traditions of a particular country. The political and social doctrines of democracy originally drew inspiration from philosophical Humanism, a philosophy which blasted the time-honoured belief that the affairs of this world and man's destiny were governed by a providential will or a divine creator, and asserted that man's world

is made by man himself, that human life was an end in itself and, as man is the measure of all things, all values must be determined by that measure.

Deduced from the humanist philosophy, democratic practice in course of time, however, drifted away from its original source of inspiration ; and ultimately, under the parliamentary system, the sovereign individual was reduced to the position of a helpless atom, while government was run by a small group of people in sole control of the administration. Critics of parliamentary democracy ascribe its failure and abuses to subjective factors, lust for power, greed for gain of individual politicians or the selfish interests of social classes. Social phenomena are, of course, determined very largely by the intentions of men ; but there are historical factors which operate independently of the intentions of politicians and parties. These are to be taken into consideration in order to draw the right lesson from the admitted failure of the parliamentary democratic practice throughout the world. Only by learning from that lesson shall we be able to arm ourselves with the guarantee against dangers to the future of democracy in India ?

The causes which led to the discrediting of democracy in Europe can be discovered in the light of the origin of democracy. Therefore, those concerned with the future of democracy should be conscious of its source of inspiration. Political doctrines and social theories are deduced from a philosophy, from a comprehensive view of life. From time immemorial, in every part of the world, human life was considered to be the expression of a super-human force, and everything in the world, it was believed, was predetermined by a providential will. This mentality was determined by the circumstances of the time ; for a long time, it dominated human history, and evidently placed restrictions on the ability of man to act independently, as the master of his destiny. The belief that everything in the world is predetermined by a force beyond the comprehension of human intelligence, obviously, condemns human life to eternal servitude. That servitude may be glorified as the condition of spiritual salvation in an after-life. The democratic view of life originated in the revolt against that time-honoured spiritual servitude. Its starting point is that man's life is the highest value ; and therefore man should not be

degraded as a means to some end, either super-human or even super-natural.

The revolt of man against a system of thought which led to regard these vices as virtues, provided the inspiration for the growth of political and social theories concerned with the freedom of man on this earth, which maintained that human intelligence was the spring of human progress, that whatever existed in the world of man had been created by man. The corollary to this view is that, if the established political and social institutions no longer serve man's purpose, man has the right and the ability to remake them. To the extent that the vast bulk of a people, not just a few politicians, move away from the authoritarian mentality, and accept the humanist view of life, to that extent does the cultural atmosphere of a country become congenial for the growth of democracy.

Judged by that standard, the future of democracy in India is not bright. Popular mentality is still authoritarian, and politicians and political parties glorify that reactionary cultural heritage as spiritual genius. People with an authoritarian mentality cannot establish democracy. If democracy fails in India, that will not be due to the conspiracy of political parties and leaders; the failure will be predetermined by objective conditions—the mentality of the people which cannot conceive of human freedom and human creativity. Yet, these are the basic values of the democratic view of life.

But the experience of the western world shows that even the theoretical acceptance of these values does not guarantee the success of democracy. However, the fundamental task must be accomplished first, and then the mistakes of others avoided. The formalisation of democracy was the primary mistake. The original philosophical principle of democracy was that every human individual is a sovereign entity. In course of time, even in constitutional theories, the principle was reduced to a legal fiction, and sovereign individuals became helpless social atoms. Although the spiritual foundation for a democratic society was created, the practice of democracy did not attach sufficient importance to human individuals, did not give sufficient scope for their free development. Consequently, democratic practice defeated its own end.

Parliamentarism is a formalisation of democracy. Parlia-

mentary democracy replaced democratic government by representative government. Representative government is not the same as a democratic government. The formalisation of democracy and its identification with government by representation were determined by existence in the modern world of States with large populations and extensive territories, in which the direct democracy of antiquity is not practicable. The failure to solve that problem led to the discredit of democracy. But the failure was not inevitable. It was due to the fact that, obsessed with the immediate practical problems of political administration, the pioneers of modern political democracy moved away from the concepts of individual liberty and sovereignty, to subordinate the individual eventually to an imaginary collective ego.

Having reduced man to impotence, politics degenerated into a scramble for power between groups of people calling themselves parties. Though the party system is believed to be the essence of democracy, it has done more harm to democracy than anything else. It has reduced democracy to demagoguery. The most skilful demagogue is the most successful democrat. In all probability, those who make the big promises, may really want to do good things. But engaged in the game of power, they must play it according to its rules. In the atmosphere of a backward country, the scramble for power will drag down democracy to an even lower depth than in other countries with a more educated electorate. The next elections will be held on the basis of universal suffrage, which is believed to be the highest form of democracy. Degraded to the formality of counting heads, democracy does not bother about what is in the heads. If the heads are empty of sense, the party getting the largest number of votes will have the largest amount of ignorance as its sanction.

We have had the experience of previous elections. There were many cases of voters going to polling booths as if they were going to the temple, because, they were voting for a Mahatma. They actually dropped rice and flowers in the ballot boxes together with the pieces of paper, which meant nothing to them. There was only one party, and it told them that to vote for the Congress was to vote for the Mahatma. The party got practically all the votes and hence the government controlled by it calls itself democratic. With universal suffrage, things will be

worse. That is no argument against universal suffrage. But no use giving people the vote without giving them also some idea of what it is all about.

Thanks to the blessing of universal suffrage, on the occasion of the next election many more people will go the polling booths in the reverential mood of temple-goers. Consequently demagogues will have a greater chance to come to power by appealing to the prejudices and superstitions of the people. This time there will be more than one party. But that will only put a higher premium on demagoguery. Demagogues will vie with each other to sway the people. To win the election, any opposition party will have to beat the Congress in the game of exploiting the ignorance and superstitions of the masses.

The future of democracy in India, therefore, is not very bright and that is not due to any evil intention on the part of the politicians, but rather to the system of party politics, to the formalisation of democracy. Therefore, whoever is concerned with the future of democracy in India, should give up the comfortable habit of blaming others. They should apply themselves to the task of creating conditions under which democracy is possible. In the meantime, perhaps for another ten years, demagoguery will vitiate political practice. The scramble for power will continue, breeding corruption and inefficiency. That cannot be helped until the foundation of democracy is laid. And that means to promote in the people the feeling that they can be the masters of their destiny. Those who believe that democracy is the best form of government must apply themselves to the fundamental task of bringing about a revolution in the mentality of the people.

Throughout history, any profound political and social change was preceded by a philosophical revolution, at least among a significant section of people. India has not yet made that necessary experience. The mentality of an entire people cannot change from today to tomorrow. But a beginning must be made. We should come out of the condition of the blind leading the blind. The vast bulk of the Indian people live in an atmosphere surcharged with prejudices and superstitions; and these vices are rationalised as virtues with the help of a modern educational system. In such a cultural atmosphere, public life is bound to be

corrupted and democracy is not possible. A growing number of people must break away from the tradition of blind faith and hero-worship, to cultivate a spirit of enquiry and self-reliance and the will to freedom. Man's faith in himself is the condition for a really democratic society.

Even after the more advanced European countries experienced a philosophical revolution, at least partially, democracy failed there, because institutions were placed above man. It was forgotten that institutions were created by men. Good institutions cannot succeed in an atmosphere where men cannot be good, or have to suffer for being good. The success of democracy presupposes an increasing number of people becoming conscious of the urge for freedom and realising that they are born to be free, if not born free. Democracy can work only in a rational social atmosphere, and a rational attitude to the problems of society and life is conditional upon the rejection of faith in anything outside nature and above man, and without the will to be free in this mortal world, and the belief that man is capable of remaking the world, democracy is not possible.

A realistic view of the conditions of the country, conditions which are rooted deep in cultural tradition, does not inspire optimism about the future of democracy. And those who talk glibly about democratic freedom and sound the alarm that one-party rule is fraught with danger of dictatorship, do not always realise the gravity of the task they have undertaken. The established one-party rule is antagonistic to democracy, but neither will democracy be guaranteed by the rise of an opposition party so long as the bulk of the people will remain psychologically predisposed blindly to accept authority imposed from above.

Since the danger to democracy does not come from the evil intention of anybody but from the cultural background and the general atmosphere in the country, let us not fight ghosts and quarrel with the motives of others; let us rather create conditions in which dictatorship will be impossible. Popular predisposition to accept authority provides a formal democratic sanction to dictatorship. An intelligent educated people like the Germans fell enthusiastically into the goose-step. On the other hand, the siren call of dictatorship did not find a response in England, and Hitler's formidable military might could not impose it in the

other countries of Western Europe. The reason for this remarkable phenomenon is that, notwithstanding a high level of academic education and general intelligence, the average Germans had never outgrown a historically conditioned mentality predisposed to accept authority, a mentality fostered in the modern setting as reverence for the State ; the countries of Western and Northern Europe, on the contrary, had experienced a philosophical revolution which destroyed the mediaeval mentality, encouraged the urge for individual freedom and a democratic way of life. The highest ambition of an average German was to be a soldier or a State official, to put on a uniform as the token of regimentation, feeling strong in the mass and under the shadow of the State. In the Western countries, liberalism taught vigilance against encroachments of the State, and held that the best government was one which governed the least. When people are predisposed to authoritarianism, and look up to God or a benevolent ruler, or a powerful dictator, to do everything for them, then they get the government they deserve. Unless the cultural and psychological precondition for the rise of dictatorship is removed, no amount of alarm against it will be heeded ; and those sounding the alarm today, given opportunity, may themselves establish a dictatorship, because they too will have to work in that same atmosphere.

People engaged in party and power politics cannot take a long view. Laying foundations is too long a process for them. They want a short-cut. The short-cut to power is always to make greater promises than others, to promise things without the confidence or even the intention to implement them. Therefore, the future of democracy in our country depends on people who are either outside politics today, or who will have the courage and vision to step out of the indecent scramble. They will have to act in a manner which may not attract the "practical politicians." They may have to plough a lone furrow for some time. But because it is the need of the time, it will appeal to more and more people. And unless love of individual freedom, as against the fiction of national freedom or the fraud of class liberation, will be felt by a sufficiently large number of people, in the near future, the prospects of democracy will be dark indeed.

But the task looks more formidable than it really is. Poli-

ticians may rationalise their failures by saying that without power they can do nothing. But when a man really wants freedom and to live in a democratic society, he may not be able to free the whole world or all the four-hundred million of India in a single mighty revolution, but he can to a large extent free at least himself by behaving as a rational and moral being, and if he can do this, others around him can do the same, and these again will spread freedom by their example. If only a hundred people will begin living and working in this manner—leaving the politicians to fight for power at the top—very soon they will multiply themselves to be hundreds and then tens of thousands. The contagion will spread and the movement to lay down the foundation of democracy will gain momentum.

CHAPTER XVIII

POLITICS OF FREEDOM*

A word to young Indians

The time has come to reorientate political practice on a sound foundation of some new and well defined ideas—and all ideas can be reduced to some philosophy. A growing number of serious people, are beginning to feel that after excited and hectic atmosphere of conflict, war and struggle of recent decades, if anything constructive is to be achieved, there has to be some serious rethinking of vital issues and fundamental problems, and that means introducing an element of philosophy into politics.

Because of the abnormal atmosphere in the country during the struggle of national independence, there was not much interest in problems which appeared to be theoretical and remote. All arguments for the need of a philosophical revolution, a mental reorientation, were brushed aside with patriotic impatience: Let us first get rid of the foreign rule and then we can turn our mind to problems of less immediate importance. The disinclination to think of politics in terms of philosophical principles is however persisting and preventing the best use being made of the hard-won national liberation.

The struggle for independence was a means to an end. Once you place the short-term programme and the long-term objective in that relation, it becomes clear that the two things could not be separated. Means necessarily influence the end. The method in which we shall carry on the immediate struggle will necessarily influence how we shall tackle our ultimate problems. Therefore, the proper method should be that the struggle for our immediate objective is carried on in a way and with means suitable for attaining the ultimate object.

In other words, even the day-to-day political struggle that we have been conducting for a number of years, the struggle for

* Lecture delivered at the Students Hall, Calcutta, January 30, 1947.

national independence, should have been adjusted to the ideal that we entertain for the freedom of the Indian people. When we say that the object of our striving for independence is the attainment of freedom for the Indian people, it ceases to be so difficult to see the relation between politics and philosophy, between political practice and philosophical principles.

Leaving aside the notions of older generations, the younger generation of our country, particularly those who have been taking active part in the political movement for independence, are all more or less influenced by what is broadly called Leftism. Under this category fall all the Socialists and Communists of various shades and kinds. All these brands of politics claim to be inspired by ideologies. As a matter of fact, the term ideology is so much bandied about by our young men that at least to them it should not come as a surprise when it is maintained that politics and philosophy are interconnected. Because, if an ideology means anything, it means a system of ideas, that is to say a philosophy. But the overriding preoccupation with the struggle for national independence relegated ideologies to the background. The time has now come when the young men and women of our country should devote some serious thinking regarding the principles of their thought and action; in other words, they should make up their mind regarding a philosophy of life, which is what determines the principles of their thinking and their acting, and they should then adjust their political and social practice to those principles.

Until that is done, the confusion in our public life, will not end and we shall not get away from this strange situation that, at last on the threshold of independence, India stands there baffled and frustrated, and threatened by the nightmare of religious war and civil strife. If we had devoted some thought to the more distant issues and fundamental problems during the years of the national struggle, it would have been possible for us to prepare for the day of independence in a clear-headed and purposive manner so as to avoid many problems that were bound to arise in the new situation, and would not have been suddenly confronted with unexpected difficulties which appear to be insoluble only because they are sudden and unexpected.

This situation is not entirely peculiar to India. Not exactly

in the same way, but generally the whole civilised world is finding itself in an insecure and unsettled mood ; cherished ideals seem to be crumbling, the present is gloomy and the future looks dark. In such a situation, the need for serious thinking is always felt most acutely, and the search for a stable rational sensible philosophy of life implies a critical examination of the theories and ideologies or philosophies which have been guiding people previously.

The concrete problems which are confronting us to-day are problems of social reconstruction. The younger generation of our country, particularly those who have been influenced by leftist ideologies, are inclined to feel that social problems are essentially economic and that social reconstruction means readjustment of economic relations. And for that purpose certain ready-made patent medicines are to be administered like socialisation, nationalisation, abolition of landlordism, etc. So far this was only theory but now we have to do something about it. Take for instance the problem of agrarian reform. All leftists are for the abolition of the zamindari system or landlordism. A stage has been reached where representative popular governments, in the various provinces, are thinking of ways and means to abolish the system of landlordism. So long as the abolition of landlordism was only a slogan, everybody felt very revolutionary, because with that slogan we could mobilise the masses and once the masses were mobilised, we could make a revolution.

We have no reason to doubt the good faith of the popular ministries in the various provinces, and must assume that sooner or later the zamindari system is going to be abolished. Our slogan is going to be realised sooner or later. What is going to happen then ? How many of our leftist youth have the time to think what is going to happen when landlordism is going to be abolished by legislation ? After all, the abolition of landlordism should not have been a merely negative slogan. Nobody raised that slogan out of hostility for particular landlords. The idea behind the slogan was that, the majority of Indians being peasants, the reconstruction of Indian economy must be primarily a change in the ownership of land as the main means of production.

Assuming that this change will now be brought about, what will be the next step ? The landlords will not raise a private

army and overthrow the present ministries. Firstly, all the governments have agreed that the dispossessed landlords will have to be compensated. How much compensation they will get may be a controversial issue, but compensation will have to be paid to them. How many of the people demanding the abolition of landlordism have calculated how much money will be required for that purpose? And where this money is to come from?

There is another aspect to the problem. In whom is the ownership of the land going to be vested after eliminating the feudal landlords. The ready answer is, to the cultivators of the land. But the mere legislation that the peasants cultivating the land will now also be, or can become, the legal owners of the land, will not improve their position. Yesterday they paid rent to the landlord; tomorrow they will pay tax to the government. But unless the amount of money they will have to pay by way of rent will be reduced, there will be no change in the economic condition of the peasants, that is of the majority of the Indian people. We can demand that the rent must be reduced. But what will then happen to the popular Ministries? Popular Ministries also have to balance their budgets. If you reduce the rents of the peasants, the budgets cannot be balanced. You may say that does not matter, but your leaders will not agree with you and will not reduce the rents.

But suppose you could reduce the rents by 25 or even 50 per cent., will that essentially improve the condition of the peasants? What are the essential factors which make the position of the peasants in Bengal for instance so intolerable? Firstly, over-population; secondly, fragmentation of holdings. So long as the present number of people remain on the land, the condition of those people will not improve and it will not mean social reconstruction.

We may demand that side by side with reduction of rents we must build modern industries. But where again is the money to come from? And suppose the money comes, how many people can be absorbed by modern industries, and how long will it take to build modern industries so that an appreciable section of the people living on the land today will be taken away from the land? You will find, for instance, if Bengal was very largely industrialised and became much like some parts of England,

perhaps the land would be relieved of ten or fifteen per cent of the labour force now living on it. And that will mean very little relief for the peasants.

Moreover, from this follows another problem: You may have built up industries, and let us assume you have taken the labour from the villages: Soon large quantities of goods will be produced which you shall have to sell. But in the meantime the standard of living of the bulk of the people has not risen appreciably. You have enlarged production but not enlarged the market. And again you will be confronted with a big new economic problem.

These are some illustrations to show that the programme of social revolution, or even of democratic reconstruction, so long as it was a matter of slogans and mass agitation, seemed easy enough, but when that programme has to be put into practice, it is an entirely different story, and good intentions and roused emotions alone will not be enough. Unfortunately we have neglected that aspect of a revolutionary movement which could supply us with the key to solve those problems of reconstruction, namely the philosophical aspect of our political practice.

We are in this awkward position because in the period of the nationalist movement we have been fascinated by our own big words, deluded by slogans which sounded attractive and looked plausible enough on paper, without trying to find out what we were to do when our slogans should ever happen to materialise one fine day. In other words, we are now confronted with the consequences of the irresponsibility of our political life in recent years. All our politics was opposition, and we still suffer from this tradition. Previously it was opposition against Imperialism; today it is opposition against one party or another. When our old enemy Imperialism is retiring, we are confronted with a pent-up spirit of aggression in search of an enemy which may lead us straight to civil war if even now we are not going to think seriously and change that spirit, canalising it into constructive channels. So long as the country was ruled by others, we could suggest impossible solutions, telling the rulers that they did not accept our suggestions because as foreigners they did not have the good of the country at heart. But now we shall have to solve all those problems ourselves.

Now, when our own representative governments are finding those problems baffling, and are therefore inclined to the practice of staging circus instead of giving bread to the people, we shall have to do our own thinking and produce positive answers and constructive solutions to all those questions and problems, viewing them in their proper perspective and explaining them to the people in that light, to get over this habit of the agitational approach, which always makes us blame somebody else, and which always compels us to be *against* something, or somebody, whether it is the foreigners, the government or this whole material Universe.

The time has come for us to take up responsibility. Since we have to take up the responsibility for reconstructing our society, of carrying out at last that social revolution which has been our professed ideal for these many years, we shall have to apply our minds to fundamental problems, and the most fundamental problem is the problem of freedom. What do we mean by freedom? This question has not until now been considered in detail. We believed in national independence. We thought, or at least it was said, that if the Indian nation became independent of Britain, everything else would be alright, everything would happen automatically for the best.

It was not necessary to make that facile assumption, because, before our very eyes we have seen independent nations whose people were not free. So, India also might become an independent nation and yet her people might not be free. It is a very superficial and baseless assumption that every member of an independent nation is also free. On the other hand, unless I can put a positive content in the idea of freedom, I cannot dispute that contention.

That being the case, and if we agree that the attainment of freedom is the object of political activity, the time has come for us to consider the problem of freedom, give some concrete content to this ideal and then find out which means should be adopted in order to attain the ideal. This should have been done much earlier. But no use crying over spilled milk. Even now, if we take a sober and dispassionate view of things, we might yet avoid worse to happen.

Politics has come to be considered exclusively a matter of power. Everything depends on capturing power, on coming to

power and it is believed that nothing can be done without this precondition. Conversely, once we capture power, once we are in power, it is thought we can do anything we like or want. But when power is captured, whether by a nation or by a class, neither the nation nor the class as a whole captures power. What happens is merely that groups of persons are capturing power in the name of a nation or a class. The experience of our time has shown that, whether under national independence or under proletarian dictatorship, it has always been a minority which captured power, and power has been vested in and wielded by the minority. Thus, if it is true that power is the means to freedom, then we shall have to despair of ever attaining freedom of the people or real democracy.

We are experiencing at this moment in India a case in point. A Constituent Assembly is meeting in Delhi. It has been elected by less than 12 p.c. of the people. Now the gentlemen who are meeting in the Constituent Assembly in Delhi are advancing the claim, conceded by our "enemies" the British, that they represent the nation as a whole and therefore power should be transferred to them. Once the Constitution is framed and power transferred to Indian hands, power will have been transferred to the representatives of 12 p.c. of the people. Not even that. Because a large majority of these 12 p.c. did not vote consciously and intelligently for those particular gentlemen. They voted in many instances simply because they were dragged to the polling stations like dumb-driven cattle and voted as they were told by those who dragged them. Actually, this Constituent Assembly represents perhaps not even one percent of the people, which should be food for thought to the advocates of parliamentary democracy. Thus, when the ideal of transfer of power will be attained, when India will become nationally independent, she will have the privilege of being ruled by a minority government representing a very small percentage of the people.

When political power will thus be concentrated in the hands of a small minority, you may have the facade of parliamentary democracy, but for all practical purposes it will be a dictatorship, even if it may be paternal and benevolent. How many people realise that, assuming the most democratic intentions on the part of the national leaders, the entire trend of our national politics

is leading towards dictatorship? And as long as we do not lay the foundation of democracy, which is a conscious and educated demos, that cannot be helped. The laying of this foundation did not have to wait till it was nearly too late. But now it is certainly high time that we begin to lay this foundation, and in that political effort we must be guided by certain philosophical principles.

Because, even if a dictatorship is benevolent, have you ever asked yourself whether freedom is possible under any kind, even the most paternal, of dictatorship? This question would not arise if the object of Indian politics was merely to get rid of the foreign rule, and to see only that every Minister, Civil Servant etc. would be an Indian, and this was all we wanted. Most of our countrymen, moved as they are by high ideals, did not have the foresight to put to themselves the question what would be the shape and contents of national independence, and what we really wanted to do with it once it came. The mistake of our political life has been to identify automatically the concepts of independence and freedom, but they are not identical. But the difference cannot be understood unless we try to go deeper into these problems and examine their philosophical background.

Independence can be defined easily enough. It is in a way negative. It means that a nation wants to be independent from some other country. You can be independent of anything, but you have to be free for something. What is freedom? This question has been asked not only in our country, but the entire modern world is confronted with the problem. Different answers to the question have been given by various kinds of political movements. For me, all freedom is an abstraction except the freedom enjoyed by individual human beings. Some simply deny that the problem exists, by dismissing the ideal of individual freedom as an empty abstraction and as such as something unattainable, assuming even it were something desirable. But if human freedom is not attainable, is it worthwhile spending all our life in politics? And freedom has to be experienced by individual men and women for their own unfoldment and fulfilment.

The objectionable theory, that freedom of the individual is an empty abstraction, has been set up by those who maintain

that we can set a nation or a class free, but to talk of every single member of a nation or a class becoming free, that is utopian ; it cannot be. Now look at the absurdity of this proposition that the freedom of the individual is zero, but if you put a large number of individual zeros together, that gives you a large amount of freedom. On the contrary, it is maintained that liberation of a nation or a class is conditional on the individuals composing the nation or the class sacrificing their freedom and other values which they may cherish in their personal lives.

We have suffered and sacrificed a good deal for the sake of independence. And now independence has come. What is our share in that independence ? It is said our share will be that national industries will be built to make the nation great. In order to do that, we must build up first of all high tariff walls around the country. The consequence will be higher prices for many things we used to buy from countries which produced them better and cheaper than ours. Who pays those higher prices ? You and I and the poor people. Take one after another the concrete things which concern the ordinary people in their daily life : they are all to be considered later ; in the meantime, we hear nothing but that India must be great, powerful and glorious, and for achieving that, Indians must suffer more. So the greater India will be, the more the Indian people must sacrifice, until some day India will be great enough. But will that day ever come ?

The same arguments hold good for a class as well as for the nation. To overthrow the class rule of the bourgeoisie, the workers must suffer and sacrifice ; and when the bourgeois class rule is overthrown, the workers must work more and suffer and sacrifice even more to build up Socialism. Now, if the precious socialist fatherland demands so much sacrifice from them, what good is its glory to the workers themselves ? Such a fatherland is not a fatherland, it is a stepfatherland.

What do we really want ? What is our ideal ? The leftists say that our ideal is Socialism or Communism. Very good. Just as freedom is a word, a concept, so also Socialism or Communism are concepts. Why should I prefer Socialism to Capitalism or Feudalism ? There must be some standard of comparison, some reason for the preference. There was a time when I chose

Communism, thinking that under Communism the common man will be in a better condition than under Feudalism or Capitalism, that he will be freer and happier. There can be only one measure of the degree of freedom enjoyed by any class or country, and that measure is the actual amount of freedom enjoyed by the individuals composing that country or that class. If we do not have that standard, we may be misled by people who want to go somewhere else from where we want to go. Therefore, we have always insisted that the object of our political activity must be clearly defined, and we must have a standard to show us whether we are advancing towards our objective or going away from it. Otherwise, in the name of freedom, people might be defrauded of their freedom by politicians exploiting their emotions, who may promise them freedom while what they really want is power; such people are rather likely to use that power to enslave others and deprive them of their human freedom in the name of a higher national freedom in which the individual citizens have no tangible share.

Only two or three years ago, nobody was prepared to take this warning seriously. Now people are listening because things are turning out different from expectation. But even now many people, and even many leftists, still do not understand the seriousness of the matter and are confusing the issues of independence and freedom. The leftists, who are merely acting as the extremist wing of nationalism, maintain that even today Imperialism is still pulling wires and oppressing India. On the other hand, Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel say that the British are as good as gone and that they themselves have all the power to do what they want. You can take your choice whom to believe, unless you have your own standards of judgment.

This confusion expresses itself in various forms of misdirected discontent. In several States, students have demonstrated in the streets and been shot. What has this to do with the freedom of the Indian people? Unless issues are understood and clearly stated, these aimless and senseless disturbances, which are brewing everywhere and occasionally breaking out, are bound to lead to loss of life and may lead to communal war. Unless we can give a positive sense and different direction to our politics, this dangerous situation will continue, make public life insecure and may lead

to catastrophe. But such a new sense of direction requires a different philosophical outlook. In order to develop that, we must come out of this hectic atmosphere of emotional exuberance and give a more solid and sober purpose to our political activities. We must explain this need to the people and help them to think for themselves, so that gradually a more rational atmosphere will be created. Only then will it become possible for us ultimately to solve our problems rationally and effectively.

We have to be clear about our objective. We want that all individuals should have full opportunities to develop as human beings ; not as proletarians or as worshippers at the shrine of some geographical goddess or other collective symbol, but as human beings. We have to tell the workers and peasants that they are not only workers and peasants, but that they are primarily human beings, and that they are men and women first and foremost, and if they are religious you can tell them that they have been created by the same God and were born equals with the Tatas and the Birlas and Mahatma Gandhi. If you must believe in a God, believe at least in a just God.

We have a National Government now and there is a lot of talk about how many ambassadors are going to be sent out to various countries. That is a matter of national prestige, but what use is it to the people ? They do not care about this outer show of greatness. They ask : What about the scarcity of cloth and food ? Previously they were told that the British took all the wealth away and therefore the people were poor. Now, instead of the three chattacks they used to give us, we should expect at least four chattacks. But instead of that we get less than before even during the war. And at the same time the prices of everything have increased. What is happening seems to be progress on the reverse gear, and in order that we should not become too conscious of it, we are given circus : India is taking her place in the United Nations Organisation and sending out ambassadors.

But all this leaves us cold. We want freedom, and freedom means that every Indian should at least begin getting increasingly the minimum necessities for building up a healthy body to house and develop a sane and healthy mind. Those minds must be formed, and for that we want a proper system of education. But

look at our system of education as it is and the new plans for what is called basic education. Are your children really to work to pay for their own education? And are the standards of education to continue going down? Is that the kind of education to produce citizens who will fight for freedom, their own and that of their fellow-citizens, citizens who will be in a position to stand up against authority, whether of the British or of the Vedas or even of Karl Marx? Unless we place such an ideal of freedom before the people, our political life will not improve and mature and our problems will remain unsolved.

Our object should be such things which can be realised. A Government which can give the people enough to eat and decent housing to live in, plus the possibility of giving their children the education they need to be free men, and a rich cultural life for all, will be a good government. But if you want to formulate your demands, you must at least know what you could do yourself to realise what you want if you were the government. You must behave responsibly and demand such things that can be done. The students of our country have been active participants in politics and they have been flattered from thousands of platforms as the makers of India's future. Now the time has come for them to live up to that flattering role. Let them tell these things to the leaders of our country, and if they cannot act accordingly, then the new generation can stand up and say to them: you have sat here long enough; for all the good you have done in the past, it is time for you to go and let others do the making of the future.

But you will have the right to do so only when you will yourself not be the proverbial blind man to lead the blind. You have to do your own thinking. You have to realise the novel problems confronting India, and not only India but the whole world. These two world wars and the period between them have completely changed the world, and the problems before us are new and unprecedented. None of the old remedies and notions can help to solve those new problems. Therefore, those problems cannot be solved by people who still cherish outdated ideals and cling to past tradition. That is so in our country also. Therefore, the old leaders are baffled. Yet they do not want to yield their leading position, convinced, as leaders are apt to be, that

none can replace them. And once in positions of power, it will not be easy to dislodge them, because they will cling to their power, as always happens. Then things will drift on as before and freedom will recede farther and farther, for ever to remain a dream.

In this critical moment, the young men and women of India, who have participated in politics out of idealism and out of the fullness of their hearts, must think hard, conscious that history has given them an enormous task and responsibility which they cannot discharge unless they have the boldness to strike out new paths and blaze new trails. These are not phrases, but very concrete propositions.

Parliamentary democracy has collapsed in many countries. The idea of dictatorships of all kinds has proved to be an undesirable alternative. We have to evolve a new type of State. That is the task of the new leadership of India. We cannot have a British Parliament nor a Soviet nor a Nazi dictatorship. None of the known clichés will fit India or solve our problems. We have to think of a new kind of political organisation of society.

The peoples of Europe are confronted with similar problems. The old methods of reconstructing the political and economic systems of most European countries have been found wanting; but the problems are still there. They have no panaceas to offer to us. We have to rebuild Indian society in its social, economic and political aspects all out of our own resources, material and ideological. But that cannot be done by the old prescriptions. New ideas have to be developed. New schemes have to be evolved. Science and technical advances in every branch of human activity alone will not help us, and no progress can be made, unless we shall be able to do this fundamental and original thinking for ourselves. Political change alone will not have any essential and lasting effect unless we have a new philosophical approach. That approach is expressed in formulating the object of politics as the attainment of freedom to be enjoyed by individual human beings.

When we say that we want freedom, we mean the freedom for every Indian, be he Hindu, Atheist, Muslim or Christian, to live and develop as human beings in every sense of the word.

because only by developing all their potentialities and learning to discriminate morally and intelligently in the process can human beings become better human beings, and hence create a better society.

That is the relation between philosophy and politics. We believe that politics, in theory and practice, is related to certain human values and ethical concepts. Politics becomes a dirty game, a mere scramble for power and success, when this relation is forgotten. That is what has happened. When politics becomes merely a matter of power and success, no nation, no class and no human being can be really free ; such pursuits can only lead from one form of slavery to another form of slavery.

It depends on this generation whether or not that misfortune is to happen. Those who want to avoid that the attainment of independence will lead to the loss of freedom, must feel the responsibility to place the ideal and the ideas of real freedom before the people, and thereby raise the movement for freedom on a higher level. Only when we turn our back on the type of politics which is based on emotional effervescence and hectic fanaticism, can we usher in a new period of fruitful scientific politics, which alone will be a pursuit worthy of rational intelligent human beings. And only as such can we pursue ideals which are truly worth living for and, if it comes to it, worth dying for.

Annexe

PRINCIPLES OF RADICAL DEMOCRACY : 22 THESES

1. Man is the archetype of society, co-operative social relationships contribute to develop individual potentialities. But the development of the individual is the measure of social progress. Collectivity presupposes the existence of individuals. Except as the sum total of freedom and well-being, actually enjoyed by individuals, social liberation and progress are imaginary ideals, which are never attained. Well-being, if it is actual, is enjoyed by individuals. It is wrong to ascribe a collective ego to any form of human community (*viz.*, nation, class, etc.), as that practice means sacrifice of the individual. Collective well-being is a function of the well-being of individuals.

2. Quest for freedom and search for truth constitute the basic urge of human progress. The quest for freedom is the continuation, on a higher level—of intelligence and emotion—of the biological struggle for existence. The search for truth is a corollary thereof. Increasing knowledge of nature enables man to be progressively free from the tyranny of natural phenomena, and physical and social environments. Truth is the content of knowledge.

3. The purpose of all rational human endeavour, individual as well as collective, is attainment of freedom, in ever increasing measure. Freedom is progressive disappearance of all restrictions on the unfolding of the potentialities of individuals, as human beings, and not as cogs in the wheels of a mechanised social organism. The position of the individual, therefore, is the measure of the progressive and liberating significance of any collective effort or social organisation. The success of any collective endeavour is to be measured by the actual benefit for its constituent units.

4. Rising out of the background of the law-governed physical nature, the human being is essentially rational. Reason being a

biological property, it is not the antithesis of will. Intelligence and emotion can be reduced to a common biological denominator. Historical determinism, therefore, does not exclude freedom of the will. As a matter of fact, human will is the most powerful determining factor. Otherwise, there would be no room for revolutions in a rationally determined process of history. The rational and scientific concept of determinism is not to be confused with the teleological or religious doctrine of predestination.

5. The economic interpretation of history is deduced from a wrong interpretation of Materialism. It implies dualism, whereas Materialism is a monistic philosophy. History is a determined process; but there are more than one causative factors. Human will is one of them, and it cannot always be referred directly to any economic incentive.

6. Ideation is a physiological process resulting from the awareness of environments. But once they are formed, ideas exist by themselves, governed by their own laws. The dynamics of ideas runs parallel to the process of social evolution, the two influencing each other mutually. But in no particular point of the process of the integral human evolution, can a direct causal relation be established between historical events and the movements of ideas. ('Idea' is here used in the common philosophical sense of ideology or system of ideas). Cultural patterns and ethical values are not mere ideological super-structures of established economic relations. They are also historically determined—by the logic of the history of ideas.

7. For creating a new world of freedom, revolution must go beyond an economic reorganisation of society. Freedom does not necessarily follow from the capture of political power in the name of the oppressed and exploited classes and abolition of private property in the means of production.

8. Communism or Socialism may conceivably be the means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. How far it can serve that purpose, must be judged by experience. A political system and an economic experiment which subordinate the man of flesh and

blood to an imaginary collective ego, be it the nation or a class, cannot possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. On the one hand, it is absurd to argue that negation of freedom will lead to freedom ; and, on the other hand, it is not freedom to sacrifice the individual at the altar of an imaginary collective ego. Any social philosophy or scheme of social reconstruction which does not recognise the sovereignty of the individual, and dismisses the ideal of freedom as an empty abstraction, can have no more than a very limited progressive and revolutionary significance.

9. The State being the political organisation of society, its withering away under Communism is a utopia which has been exploded by experience. Planned economy on the basis of socialised industries presupposes a powerful political machinery. Democratic control of that machinery alone can guarantee freedom under the new order. Planning of production for use is possible on the basis of political democracy and individual freedom.

10. State ownership and planned economy do not by themselves end exploitation of labour ; nor do they necessarily lead to an equal distribution of wealth. Economic democracy is no more possible in the absence of political democracy than the latter is in the absence of the former.

11. Dictatorship tends to perpetuate itself. Planned economy under political dictatorship disregards individual freedom on the pleas of efficiency, collective effort and social progress. Consequently, a higher form of democracy in the socialist society, as it is conceived at present, becomes an impossibility. Dictatorship defeats its professed end.

12. The defects of formal parliamentary democracy have also been exposed in experience. They result from the delegation of power. To make democracy effective, power must always remain vested in the people, and there must be ways and means for the people to wield the sovereign power effectively, not periodically, but from day to day. Atomised individual citizens are powerless for all practical purposes, and most of the time. They have no

means to exercise their sovereignty and to wield a standing control of the State machinery.

13. Liberalism is falsified or parodied under formal parliamentary democracy. The doctrine of *laissez faire* only provides the legal sanction to the exploitation of man by man. The concept of economic man negativates the liberating doctrine of individualism. The economic man is bound to be a slave or a slaveholder. This vulgar concept must be replaced by the reality of an instinctively rational being who is moral because he is rational. Morality is an appeal to conscience, and conscience is the instinctive awareness of, and reaction to, environments. It is a mechanistic biological function on the level of consciousness. Therefore, it is rational.

14. The alternative to parliamentary democracy is not dictatorship; it is organised democracy in the place of the formal democracy of powerless atomised individual citizens. The parliament should be the apex of a pyramidal structure of the State reared on the base of an organised democracy composed of a countrywide network of People's Committees. The political organisation of society (the State) will be coincident with the entire society, and consequently the State will be under a standing democratic control.

15. The function of a revolutionary and liberating social philosophy is to lay emphasis on the basic fact of history that man is the maker of his world—man as a thinking being, and he can be so only as an individual. The brain is a means of production, and produces the most revolutionary commodity. Revolutions presuppose iconoclastic ideas. An increasingly large number of men conscious of their creative power, motivated by the indomitable will to remake the world, moved by the adventure of ideas, and fired with the ideal of a free society of freemen, can create the conditions under which democracy will be possible.

16. The method and programme of social revolution must be based on a reassertion of the basic principle of social progress. A social renaissance can come only through determined and widespread endeavour to educate the people as regards the principles

of freedom and rational co-operative living. The people will be organised into effective democratic bodies to build up the socio-political foundation of the post revolutionary order. Social revolution requires in rapidly increasing number men of the new renaissance, and a rapidly expanding system of People's Committees, and an organic co-ordination of both. The programme of revolution will similarly be based on the principles of freedom, reason and social harmony. It will mean elimination of every form of monopoly and vested interest in the regulation of social life.

17. Radical democracy presupposes economic reorganisation of society so as to eliminate the possibility of exploitation of man by man. Progressive satisfaction of material necessities is the precondition for the individual members of society unfolding their intellectual and other finer human potentialities. An economic reorganisation, such as will guarantee a progressively rising standard of living, is the foundation of the Radical Democratic State. Economic liberation of the masses is an essential condition for their advancing towards the goal of freedom.

18. The economy of the new social order will be based on production for use and distribution with reference to human needs. Its political organisation excludes delegation of power which in practice, deprives the people of effective power; it will be based on the direct participation of the entire adult population through the People's Committees. Its culture will be based on universal dissemination of knowledge and on minimum control and maximum scope for, and incentive to, scientific and creative activities. The new society, being founded on reason and science, will necessarily be planned. But it will be planning with the freedom of the individual as its main purpose. The new society will be democratic—politically, economically as well as culturally. Consequently, it will be a democracy which can defend itself.

19. The ideal of Radical Democracy will be attained through the collective efforts of spiritually free men united in the determination of creating a world of freedom. They will function as the guides, friends and philosophers of the people rather than

as their would-be rulers. Consistently with the goal of freedom, their political practice will be rational and therefore ethical. Their effort will be reinforced by the growth of the people's will to freedom. Ultimately, the Radical Democratic State will rise with the support of enlightened public opinion as well as intelligent action of the people. Realising that freedom is inconsistent with concentration of power, Radical Democrats will aim at the widest diffusion of power.

20. In the last analysis education of the citizen is the condition for such a reorganisation of society as will be conducive to common progress and prosperity without encroaching upon the freedom of the individual. The People's Committees will be the schools for the political and civic education of the citizen. The structure and function of the Radical Democratic State will enable detached individuals to come to the forefront of public affairs. Manned with such individuals, the State machinery will cease to be the instrument in the hands of any particular class to coerce others. Only spiritually free individuals in power can smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all.

21. Radicalism integrates science into social organisation and reconciles individuality with collective life; it gives to freedom a moral-intellectual as well as a social content; it offers a comprehensive theory of social progress in which both the dialectics of economic determinism and dynamics of ideas find their due recognition; and it deduces from the same a method and a programme of social revolution in our time.

22. Radicalism starts from the dictum that "man is the measure of everything" (Protagoras) or "man is the root of mankind" (Marx), and advocates reconstruction of the world as a commonwealth and fraternity of free men, by the collective endeavour of spiritually emancipated moral men.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
REASON ROMANTICISM AND REVOLUTION

In Two Volumes

A treatise on Social Philosophy deduced from a Humanist view of cultural history and a scientific interpretation of Humanism.

Some Press Opinions

".....As a philosopher, Roy was at heart a thoroughly western liberal rationalist of the age of Mill and T. H. Green. Marx made his impact on this foundation, and was beyond doubt the greatest single force in shaping Roy's thought. His chapter on Marxism is one of the most penetrating in the book. Above all, he clearly sees how much Marx owed to his liberal and humanitarian predecessor in the campaign for social justice....."

The Times (Literary Supplement) London.

".....he offers in this volume a history of the philosophy of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which testifies to his great erudition."

Bulletin. Int. Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

".....As a piece of historical writing, apart from its controversial character, Roy's book must be ranked high."

Times of India, Bombay.

".....The book deserves to be studied as a scholarly contribution to the history of European philosophy written from the point of view of one who regards all history as the movement towards human freedom."

Hindusthan Times, Delhi.

".....It is of immense value as a document illustrating the mind of an Indian intellectual who reckons with every manifestation of modern western political thought and practice."

Hindu, Madras.

".....Mr. Roy undertakes a penetrating analysis of European history since the Renaissance to substantiate his thesis."

The Calcutta Review.

Price : Vol. One Rs. 10'00, Vol. Two Rs. 12'50

RENAISSANCE PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LTD.

15, Bankim Chatterjee Street, Calcutta - 12